

## The Crow Hill Company ...BRIDGE GUITAR



Having kicked off 'Season Two' of its evolving journey when recently relaunching the much-vaunted VAULTS... virtual instruments as new and improved versions, The Crow Hill Company has dropped VAULTS - BRIDGE GUITAR - generously sampling an acoustic parlour guitar, detuned and intimately mic'd using a DIY rubber bridge to dampen the sustain and resonance, resulting in a beautifully muted, lo-fi tone that is perfect for songwriters - as a unique addition to this free-for-all-to-download-and-make-music-with-for-the-rest-of-their-lives-styled collection curated with the same care and attention to detail as the Make Music, Your Music motto-abiding Edinburgh-based enterprise's paid-for releases, as of July 16...

As an accomplished guitarist himself, The Crow Hill Company's Theo Le Derf is better qualified than most to talk about the instrument that lends its name (in part) and distinctive sound to his employer's latest monthly drop - unique as it is: "The rubber bridge guitar is a distinctive, lo-fi acoustic innovation pioneered by LA luthier Reuben Cox at his Old Style Guitar Shop in Silver Lake since the early 2010s. Cox salvaged inexpensive vintage acoustic guitars from brands such as Harmony, Kay, and Silvertone, and replaced the wooden saddle with a rubber slab. This created a muted, percussive tone, which is reminiscent of a pizzicato on a cello or violin. This unusual sound caught on when Perfume Genius used it on his 2017 single 'Slip Away', drawing in artists like Jeff Tweedy from Wilco, Madison Cunningham, Phoebe Bridgers, and Taylor Swift on her album Folklore."

Asked about its appeal, Theo Le Derf replies thus: "The rubber bridge dampens

sustain and high frequencies, which makes it ideal for vocal-based music, because it really allows the voice to shine on top of the guitar. In recent years, indie artists have embraced it - not just in a studio context, but also on TikTok, using rubber bands, foam clamps, and Babolat tennis racquet dampeners in order to approximate the sound without having to permanently alter their guitars. I can really vouch for the latter's effectiveness, and I really like the flexibility of being able to put this dampener on any guitar."

Given that VAULTS - BRIDGE GUITAR's recently relaunched software siblings introduced a new-look GUI (Graphical User Interface) that its creators collectively felt was a real joy to play with, it should come as little surprise to learn that The Crow Hill Company has also applied it to its latest monthly drop. Diving deeper, Theo Le Derf ably acts as a guide to its operation, offering, "The first large dial is MUTE, automatically assigned to MIDI CC 1; that allows you to seamlessly control how dampened the sound of the guitar is. The second of the large dials is DISTANCE, which allows you to control the space and depth of the guitar signal by choosing either a mid or far mic configuration. Our first of the small dials is MOD, which is a frequency shifting-based chorus effect, which allows for constant movement of the sound; it has a very nostalgic character to it. Then there's LO-FI, which adds a lot of tape warble and wonder to your sound, and it's often the way that rubber bridge guitars are processed. Finally, we have our standard ECHO and SPLOSH - ECHO being a lovely ping-pong delay, which ping-pongs from left to right in the stereo field, while SPLOSH is a really lush reverb."

Thanks, then, to The Crow Hill Company's VAULTS - BRIDGE GUITAR, the unique rubber bridge guitar sound is free for all to download and make music with for the rest of their lives - and all without necessarily needing to be an accomplished guitarist to make the most of it. Though Theo Le Derf is free to choose either way of working, his sincerity shines through warmly when ending on a high note: "I've always been a fan of this warm, muted sound - particularly in singer-songwriter music, and I'm so happy you will all have it at your fingertips."

VAULTS... releases from The Crow Hill Company - including ...BRIDGE GUITAR - are free for all to download and make music with for the rest of their lives from the website below. VAULTS - BRIDGE GUITAR installation and activation requires installation of The Crow Hill App - an easy-to-use app designed by the best in the business to provide seamless download, installation, integration, calibration, and organisation of The Crow Hill Company tools.

Although anyone adding a VAULTS... release to their account for free can make music with it for the rest of their lives, only six such releases are available to download at any given time - the oldest being 'rested' whenever a new monthly release is added. All is not lost for those who may have missed the boat, so-to-speak, since those VAULTS... taken out of rotation periodically reappear as donation-ware, with six rested releases already available as VAULTS ARCHIVE N°01 for a small donation to Love Music, a Scottish dynamic music inclusion and education charity that strives to increase its participants' confidence, musical skills, and well-

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being through an exciting range of open-access projects designed to remove all barriers to participation and increase diversity in music-making.

[www.thecrowhillcompany.com](http://www.thecrowhillcompany.com)

[www.lovemusic.org.uk](http://www.lovemusic.org.uk)