



Redd Volkaert Band with Cindy Cashdollar

Telecaster master of “twang” and the “First Lady” of steel guitar
Austin, Texas

Redd Volkaert, the “telecaster guru”, is no household name, but in the world of “twang” guitar there is a cult of Redd. In Austin, Texas where he now lives, players on their way to their own gigs will stop into Volkaert's regular Saturday afternoon sessions at the Continental Club — where the band plays for tips — to get a cold beer and a free guitar lesson. There he is on the Continental stage, putting his vintage '53 Telecaster through its paces. As *The Austin Chronicle* states, he’s “all over the guitar like grease on a pork chop, quoting jazz, country, blues, and Western swing as effortlessly as turning on the lights in the living room.” With a disarming modesty, he makes his guitar do things that leaves other players shaking their heads, thinking, “Should I practice more or just quit?” Joining Redd and his band is the First Lady of Steel Guitar, Cindy Cashdollar, a master musician and one of the few women to take up the lap steel and slide guitars as well as the dobro. Together, these two guitar virtuosos trade some blazing licks.

Born in Vancouver, British Columbia, Redd Volkaert started “noodling” on a hand-me-down guitar from his brother when he was 10 years old. When Dad took the local music owner for an undisclosed sum at pool, the debt was satisfied with a '58 Fender Esquire. He gave that guitar to his son, and for years, Redd fell asleep with that guitar in his arms, playing it morning, noon and night, skipping school, listening to records over and over, and copping licks. By the time he was 16, Redd was well on the way to having played every Moose, Elks, Legion, VFW, nightclub, and beer joint in the area. At 17, he moved on to Edmonton, Alberta, where he began playing music full time and then, after a short stint in Los Angeles, Redd headed to Nashville in 1990. He landed a gig with Don Kelley’s band, known to be a kind of finishing school for Nashville’s hottest session musicians.

For the next 11 years Redd worked and recorded with an impressive list of country greats that reads like a “Who’s Who” of country music. In 1997, he got a call offering the “dream gig” - to become lead guitarist for one of his heroes, Merle Haggard. Redd spent the next seven years with Haggard as a member of Merle’s famous band the Strangers, recording and touring non-stop, and appearing in concert and national television before millions of people, establishing his place among the country’s top Telecaster guitarists.

When he moved to Austin in 2000, Redd quickly became a fixture in that city’s thriving music scene, performing with his own band several nights a week. He’s attracted a

devoted following there, especially among fellow musicians, who appreciate the total Redd package: his tasteful and humorous approach to the guitar as well as his technical brilliance, his solid song writing and deep, rumbly honky-tonk baritone. The consensus is that if Redd were young, skinny and pretty, he'd be a superstar. But the truth is that he looks much better in his overalls than he would in tight Wranglers, and doesn't really care about fame. He just loves making music.

Cindy Cashdollar gained national attention as steel guitarist for the popular western swing group Asleep At the Wheel, winning five Grammys during her eight-year stint with that band. Over the years she's worked with Bob Dylan, Beausoleil, Leon Redbone, Willie Nelson, Merle Haggard, Dolly Parton, George Strait and The Dixie Chicks. She also performs regularly on Garrison Keillor's public radio show "A Prairie Home Companion." In 2003, the Academy of Western Artists Awards named her Instrumentalist of the Year, and she has been inducted into the Texas Western Swing Hall of Fame.

Cashdollar grew up on a dairy farm in Woodstock, New York. She was 13 in 1969 when the famous festival occurred, and of course wanted to go. But her parents "watched me like a hawk that weekend," she relates. She was into her 20s before she found her place in the musical universe playing slide guitars.

Like Redd, she's a longtime "sideman" who's stepping out. Cashdollar released her first solo album *Slide Show* that includes a track with Redd on guitar in 2004. Commenting on her collaborations with Redd Volkaert, Cashdollar says of her fellow musician: "He makes you reach way down inside and come up with stuff you'd never have come up with without him." Sounds like the Redd Volkaert Band and Cindy Cashdollar are likely to put on one heck of a show.