

# SPIN

## GEAR

### Ready to Wail

Rockers are nabbing stylish custom guitars from a surprising source

BY PETER GERSTENZANG

**T**he term *custom guitar* conjures images of expensive, ostentatious six-strings, but First Act, an 11-year-old Boston-based instrument manufacturer, is interested in rockin' and rock-bottom prices. While the bulk of its sales comes from low-end models (starting price: \$99) at discount retailers like Costco and Target, its original designs (from \$2,000) have gained favor with Franz Ferdinand's Nick McCarthy, who has a white snakeskin First Act. Other customers include:



**1. Nick Zinner (Yeah Yeah Yeahs)** Zinner says he modeled his semihollow body on the one played by the Cramps' Poison Ivy. "It looks and sounds so badass," he says. "I remember in the '80s, all the metal dudes had guitars with, like, a Jack Daniels bottle on them, and I thought that was the cheesiest thing. I wanted a huge guitar with a huge sound."



**2. Jason Isbell (Drive-By Truckers)** Isbell believes his inspiration came from Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers at Colorado's Red Rocks. "They had a bunch of old Gibson Firebirds, so that's probably what inspired me," he says. "I'm a fan of vintage-style guitars. I wanted the Bigsby, which is the big, old-school chrome vibrato bar."



**3. Paul Westerberg** The former Replacements frontman stepped into a North Carolina Wal-Mart to buy some shaving cream, saw a First Act, and plunked down \$160. "I was attracted to it because it was cheap, loud, and flashy," Westerberg says. "Just like rock'n'roll ought to be."

