



"ON THE HEAVY SIDE, WE'RE INSPIRED BY BANDS LIKE ALICE IN CHAINS, NIRVANA, METALLICA, AND TOOL," SAYS FRONTMAN/GUITARIST Justin Stewart Cotta. "But then there's the more ambient, sonic stuff like U2 and Pink Floyd. And of course Hendrix, and even some old Elvis stuff—and above all, AC/DC."

Three of the four members of Memento are Australian, so the AC/DC connection is deeply rooted. "I think every Australian kid is exposed to that band by the age of 11," laughs Cotta. "It's hard not to fall in love with them as your lifelong heroes."

On Memento's debut record, *beginnings*, Cotta and guitarist Space tried to emulate some of the techniques they'd heard on old AC/DC records. "Sometimes our roles are just like Malcolm and Angus," explains Space. "We might play rhythm parts together, with Justin on the left side, and me on the right. I love the extra punch you get when you pan guitars all the way to the sides like AC/DC does.

And at other times, we play in completely different styles that still complement each other. In those cases, Justin does more of the chunky riffs, and my playing is usually more ethereal."

Sift through any band's list of influences and you're bound to find the musical touchstones that matter most. For Memento—a heavy rock band that merges chunky riffs with ethereal guitar textures and hypercharged vocals—the inspirations are downright omnivorous.

**WIGWAGGATIONS**  
Riffs to Remember



Guided by producer Toby Wright (Alice in Chains, Korn) and mixer Brendan O'Brien (Pearl Jam, Red Hot Chili Peppers), the band got a crash course in the art and science of guitar tones. "I looked up to Toby immensely," says Space. "I was quite naïve in how to create certain sounds. But he brought so many sonic ideas to the table, and his mind is so attuned to guitar aesthetics. For example, I had no idea you could put a distorted amp in one room and a clean amp in another room and sync them up together to make this amazing meld of clarity and punch."

Cotta agrees: "Toby taught us a lot. We're much more knowledgeable about guitar tones now. For example, we combined five or six different tones through different amps to make one huge sound. Some of the tones were really annoying by themselves, but when it all came together, I realized you needed those annoying tones to add the extra edge and bite to the overall sound. But it's not necessarily about saturation and distortion—sometimes it's just a warm, beautiful tone played with passion. You listen to Angus' lead tones, and it's almost reminiscent of B.B. King, how sweet those notes are. That's one of the things we want to achieve."

Another key to Memento's crunchy yet fluid guitar sound is their choice of instruments. Space has a standard-scale Yamaha AES820, and both guitarists play the baritone versions of the same guitar, the AES820 Drop6. "The Drop6 is really harmonic," notes Space, "and the feel is absolutely amazing, like playing butter. With the DiMarzio pickups I use, I get a very punchy, clean, thick, warm sound. It's a cross between a really heavy Jerry Cantrell/Alice In Chains sound and a bluesy Hendrix tone. The body looks great, too—it's not like everything else out there. It's nice to have something a little different."

Cotta adds, "It's a blessing having a guitar that can stay in tune even when it's lowered to A or B. I'm more the basher than Space is, but the Yamaha withstands that kind of playing without losing its tuning. And I love the tone, and the fact that it's so different from all the other guitars out there."

Cotta also plays a Yamaha CJX32 Jumbo Acoustic, which you can hear on their new album's title track. "I've absolutely found my niche with it," Cotta enthuses. "It sounds beautiful. It has depth and low end, yet it still has enough highs to cut through. With fingerpicking stuff, it's crucial that your action is decent, but this guitar is beyond 'decent'—it's a kind of perfection. I wouldn't play this guitar on that song if the guitar weren't right, 'cause the song means too much to me. So whatever guitar gets played on it, you know it's because it's the real deal."