

MUSIC

Dallas guitarist joins Eagles as tour member

Part of Vegas gig, Holt savors turn playing 'Hotel California'

It's anyone's guess when the Eagles will finish their "Long Goodbye" farewell tour. Until they do, Dallas guitarist Christopher Holt is officially along for the ride.

Holt — a veteran of local bands Bastards of Soul, the Slack and Sorta — joined the Eagles as a touring guitarist last weekend when the group continued its Las Vegas residency at the Sphere, the \$2.3 billion high-tech arena that opened in 2023. He's helping drive the band in "Life in the Fast Lane" and other hits again this weekend and 12 more Sphere concerts through April.

Holt replaces longtime Eagles guitarist Stuart Smith, who announced this week he's been diagnosed with Parkinsonism, a term that describes a group of neurological problems. Smith and Holt are good friends who'd performed together as members of Don Henley's solo band.

"I'm trying to fill the giant shoes of all three that came before me," Holt said, referring to Smith and previous Eagles guitarists Don Felder and Bernie Leadon. "It's some of the most beautiful guitar work ever recorded, in my opinion. It's the highest honor for me to do it, and it's my duty to get it right."

Aside from being in Henley's solo band and now the Eagles, Holt has also been a member since 2022 of the Dirty Knobs, led by Mike Campbell of Tom Petty and the

Heartbreakers fame. The group played in September at Arlington Music Hall.

Performing with the Eagles is "definitely challenging," says Holt, who also sings harmony while playing guitar.

"There's a ton of iconic lead guitar to play — solos that people know every note of — so you wanna make sure you get the tones and the phrasing just right. The Eagles are legendary perfectionists and the parts are tricky, so it's no easy feat to nail it, every time."

The Eagles have been starting their shows in recent years with "Hotel California," a song that rivals the Beatles' "The End" on the list of all-time greatest dueling guitar solos. At the Sphere, Holt straps on a big double-neck electric guitar for "California," just like Smith and Felder before him, and trades wailing solos with Joe Walsh.

"It's a bit terrifying, but also thrilling. I've been playing that

solo since I was a teenager in my bedroom, so I know it quite well," Holt says.

"The double-neck guitar is quite a beast to handle onstage, but I'm getting more comfy with it," he adds. "And the Sphere itself is a tough venue. I have to really focus and not be distracted by all the eye candy swirling around. But it's just the coolest thing ... an absolute dream for a guitar nerd like me."

The Eagles started their Sphere residency in September with Smith, who's been a key part of the group since Felder left in 2001. "I must bow out of my role with the Eagles while I can still do so gracefully," Smith said



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Craig Adams

Dallas guitarist Christopher Holt (right) played next to Joe Walsh (left) during a recent Eagles show at the Sphere in Las Vegas.

in a statement. "It's been a great quarter of a century, and I had hoped to be able to finish out this year with the band. But I must now do what's best for all concerned."

The Dallas-based Henley issued a separate statement saying "the Eagles will be forever grateful for the extraordinary talents that he brought to both our recordings and

live performances. Stuart will be greatly missed, but he will always be a part of our musical family. We know our many fans join us in wishing him well."

Thor Christensen is a Dallas freelance writer and former pop music critic for The Dallas Morning News.