You’ve probably seen Del Casher, sporting a yachtsman’s cap as he cruises around town in his fire-engine-red sedan, and never given him a second look. But the 73-year-old musician, who operates a sound studio on Magnolia Boulevard in Burbank, is one of the most critical secret weapons in America’s pop music arsenal.

His credits alone are mind-boggling.

“In the 1960’s, I did the Hollywood music business from A to Z,” Casher said with a mischievous grin. “Played lead guitar on Gene Autry’s ‘Melody Ranch’ TV show in the morning, and at night, Frank Zappa would hire me to sit in with the Mothers of Invention at the Whisky A Go-Go.”

Casher, who arrived here from his native Indiana circa 1961, also anchored popular trio the Three Suns, was regularly featured as a soloist on “The Lawrence Welk Show,” worked as in-demand studio session player with everyone from Phil Spector to Frank Sinatra, and appeared alongside Elvis Presley in 1964’s “Roustabout.”

Second only to Les Paul in terms of both musical skill and technical innovation, Casher developed the portable tape delay Ecco-Fonic system, the Fender Electronic Echo Chamber and, most significantly, was the first guitarist to use and record with the wah-wah pedal, a revolutionary sound effect that altered the tone and course of rock ‘n’ roll.

Introduced by the Vox company as the Mid-Range Boost Switch, and proposed for use with amplified trumpets, it was Casher who re-designed it, in early 1967, as the foot pedal unit that enabled a player to re-shape his guitar tone into wild, undreamed of new capabilities.

After Casher began experimenting with it, first on a grail-like Vox marketing demo record and then formally introduced the wah-wah on the Vic Mizzy soundtracks of Phyllis Diller’s “Traveling Saleslady” and Don Knotts’ “The Ghost & Mr. Chicken,” the new breakthrough caught the ear of numerous musicians.

Jimi Hendrix quickly elevated the distinctive effect to iconic heights on his masterpiece album “Electric Ladyland,” and later, the wah-wah’s undulating sound helped Isaac Hayes’ “Theme from Shaft” win an Oscar as 1972’s Song of the Year.

While Casher’s historic role as a behind-the-scenes wizard is impressive, the man is scarcely a relic from another age. His live performances are nothing less than flabbergasting.

Casher’s wah-wah laced arrangement of Duke Ellington’s “Caravan” goes beyond the exotic, his “Epiphone Blues” is an exercise in melancholy atmospherics that transports his audience into another dimension. From communicative, intricate jazz flights to finger-picking rockabilly workouts like “Big Foot,” Casher’s breathtaking facility and flawless playing ranks him as one of the world’s top guitarists.

Cashier, who has appeared locally at Viva Cantina and was a fixture at Mr. B’s, both in Burbank, also has some deep Burbank broadcast roots: His performance of the NBC News Center 4 theme aired nightly from 1971 to 1988.

The guitarist currently has a regular, 6-10 p.m. gig every Wednesday at Bel Air’s Luxe Sunset Hotel and, with any luck, we’ll be able to find him a bit closer to home in the near future.

“I just love what I do.” Casher said. “So I’m not turning down any work these days.”

JOHNNY WHITESIDE is a veteran music journalist based in Burbank and author of “Ramblin’ Rose: the Life & Career of Rose Maddox” and “Cry: the Johnnie Ray Story.”