

MC

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SEPTEMBER 2026

COVER STORY

MARK HAZE

BUILT ON RAGE.
DRIVEN BY PURPOSE.

GEAR

GIBSON & EPIPHONE

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MODERN VERSIONS.

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MARK BIAGIO

MUSIC THROUGH
EVERY SEASON

SHAUN NARAINSINGH

YOUNG TALENT.
BIG DREAMS.

SCHOOL OF ROCK

REAL STUDENTS.
REAL PROGRESS.
REAL MUSIC.

DON FELDER

THE GUITAR LEGEND
BEHIND A ROCK ICON

nord

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New Inspiration,
Timeless Tone.



SEPTEMBER EDITION OF PROAUDIO MUSICGEAR MAGAZINE

There is something special about people who simply refuse to stop making music.

This month, MusicGear celebrates musicians at very different stages of that journey. Our cover artist, Mark Haze, continues to build an incredible career through songwriting, performance and a genuine love for his craft, while Mark Biagio reminds us that music can remain part of your life through every season.

We also spend some time with young guitarist Shaun Narainsingh, meet three wonderful students from School of Rock, and look back at Don Felder and the extraordinary guitar story behind one of rock music's most recognisable songs.

And, of course, there is plenty of gear. From Gibson and Epiphone guitars to the Nord Stage 4 Compact, Audio-Technica and Swiff Audio, this edition is filled with instruments and technology designed for one purpose — helping people make music.

That is really what MusicGear is about.

Whether you have been playing for thirty years, picked up your first instrument last week, or are still thinking about starting, there is always something new to discover.

STAY LOUD. STAY INSPIRED.
Proaudio MusicGear Team

MusicGear

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Product Library

This magazine is designed to inform, supply, and provide information relating to the industry that we find ourselves in. Some of the material that we have used is resourced from websites around the world to help bring perspective and insight to your business' and your lives. Products highlighted and reviewed may or may not be available, if you have any questions relating to the information herein, please contact us.

CONTENT

MG

6

FEATURE

**MARK
HAZE**

BUILT ON RAGE. DRIVEN BY PURPOSE.

MG

**MARK
BIAGIO**

22

MG

**SHAUN
NARAINSINGH**

32

MG

40

**Don
Felder**

A TRIBUTE TO A GUITAR LEGEND



MEWZO

**BEYOND
THE ENCORE**

PREPARATION • PERFORMANCE • RELATIONSHIP

20

nord®

BIG STAGE, SMALLER PACKAGE



62

SWIFF
AUDIO

Cut the Cable,
Keep the Tone



54

Gibson®

Les Paul Modern
Figured Seafoam Green



16

Epiphone®

Les Paul Classic
Heritage Cherry Sunburst



28

audio-technica

AE6100



58

Gibson®

Les Paul Special
Vintage Cherry



36

Epiphone®

1963 Firebird I
Heather Poly



46

THE EVOLUTION OF THE
Epiphone®
LES PAUL



50

66

SCHOOLROCK

JENNI-LYNNE GRIFFITH

ETHAN KRIGE

XANDER VENTER





A portrait of Mark Haze, a man with long brown hair and a beard, wearing a dark denim jacket. A red graphic with the text "MARK HAZE" and a stylized logo is overlaid on his chest.

MARK HAZE



There is something to be said for an artist who has been around long enough to experience the highs, the setbacks and the unexpected moments that come with a life in music—and still approaches it with the desire to grow.

South African singer-songwriter and full-time touring musician **Mark Haze** has built his career on powerful vocals, commanding live performances and a sound that moves comfortably between rock, soul and blues.

Along the way, he has opened for international artists including Bon Jovi, Seether and Trey Songz, collaborated with musicians such as Ryan Roxie from Alice Cooper's band, and built the kind of relationship with audiences that can only come from years spent performing live.

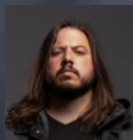
But perhaps what stands out most in our latest conversation with Mark is not simply what he has achieved, but what continues to drive him.

His music is evolving. His songwriting has become more vulnerable. Family has found its way into the creative process, including an unexpected collaboration with his young son Zac. And through songs such as *Walked On By*, Mark is discovering that sometimes the most powerful music doesn't need to be overthought—it simply needs to be honest.

Nearly a year after the release of *Walked On By*, we caught up with Mark to talk about the journey so far, the lessons learned through years in the South African music industry, returning to the road, the importance of resilience, and why, after everything he has experienced, he still never wants to stop learning.



MC Welcome back to MusicGear Magazine, Mark! For readers discovering your music for the first time, who is Mark Haze, and what do you hope people take away from your music and live performances?



I try my best to be the sort of musician/performer that connects with people through sound and energy. On the surface, my stuff is a blend of rock, soul, and blues with modern textures, but at its core it's about honesty & emotion.

When people come to a show, I want them to leave feeling uplifted, inspired, and part of something bigger than themselves.

MC You've built a reputation as one of South Africa's most exciting live performers. Looking back, what moments have had the biggest impact on your journey as an artist?



There have been so many, but a few stand out. Opening for international acts like Seether, Trey Songz, and Bon Jovi made me realise that my music could hold its own on any stage.

Hearing my songs sung back to me by a crowd for the first time was another big one, because it made me realise that I could, and was, making a difference in people's lives. Collaborating with my brother Gareth on his solo project, as well as the happy accident of having my young son co-produce one of my singles, reminded me why I started making music in the first place.

Then there were the moments I could never have planned or even dreamed would happen, like getting a call to work with Ryan Roxie from the Alice Cooper band. Those moments continue to surprise me, shape my confidence, and keep me grounded at the same time.





Your music blends rock, soul, blues, and modern influences.

How has your sound evolved over the years, and what continues to inspire your creativity?



I like to think that my sound has matured somewhat over the years. In its infancy, there was a raw rock energy that is still at the core of what drives my style, but it's evolved into something more layered and soulful as I've incorporated new ideas and tried to keep an open mind.

I've learned to embrace vulnerability in my songwriting, not just speaking in an artistic way, but sometimes drawing directly from everyday life as subject matter. That's opened new doors for me creatively. After all, my inspiration comes from everyday life: family, struggles, triumphs, and constantly listening to both old and new music across a variety of genres.

I never really want to stop learning. Sometimes, it's the battle between wanting to change and wanting to stay the same that leads me to the sweet spot where I feel inspired to create new material.



MG Every artist faces challenges. What has been the biggest lesson you've learned throughout your career, and how has it shaped you as both a musician and a person?



Patience and resilience. The industry can be tough, and success doesn't happen overnight. Often the case is simply that you don't have to make waves but be consistent and stick around long enough to become a household name. I've learned to trust the process, stay true to my vision, and not let setbacks define me.

That lesson has shaped me not just as a musician, but as a person who values perseverance and authenticity. At the end of the day, the only person responsible for making anything happen in my life is me, so I try to always keep myself accountable.





MG *Walked On By* revealed a more intimate side of your songwriting. What inspired the song, and what message do you hope listeners take away from it?



I often write bits of songs or rough material while on the road. I pieced some of this song together a while back, as I often tend to do on some nights while touring. I played it acoustically for the crowd a few years ago.

The song wasn't anywhere near finished, but I like to throw things like that out there every now and then. I ended up forgetting about the song, but somebody had filmed that impromptu performance, and the video had been on YouTube for a while. A fan left me a comment about how the song made him feel and asked why it had never been released.

That reminded me of it and got me searching for it online, after I had nearly forgotten about it. At the same time, I was contemplating the kind of grief that people can cause while trolling comment sections online, and I felt that I could easily relate to it, considering I'm a musician and this is what I do for a living.

The timing was just right, I suppose. I was trying to get the point across that, no matter how harsh or ridiculous the comment, it's okay to ignore the negativity, walk away from it, and turn the other cheek. I tracked it in one night by myself, working from about 8pm until 6am the next day. I did some remixing and final edits the following day after taking a nap for a few hours, and the song was done and ready to be sent out to the team and the record company. In less than 24 hours!

I think the takeaway here is that things don't have to be dragged out, good songs can still happen without too much planning or preparation, provided you're willing to jump in with both feet when inspiration strikes. I think its beauty lies in its simplicity, and I think the message comes through in the spaces between the musical notes. I think that's why people are drawn to it.

MG It's been nearly a year since the release of *Walked On By*. What have been some of the biggest highlights of the past year, both professionally and personally?



Professionally, releasing 'Walked on By' and seeing how deeply it resonated with listeners was huge for me. The single came together in a very short time and started gaining streams even quicker than I anticipated, so a lot of what happened with it was unexpected.

I was also able to get back out on tour in Gauteng after nearly four years. Performing live again after the pandemic restrictions were lifted reminded me just how vital that connection with an audience is. The last time I toured there, attendance was difficult, and I couldn't do the bigger performances I had hoped for.

This tour put to rest any hesitation I had coming out of that experience. Coupled with the upcoming tours to the Garden Route, Gqeberha, and Oudtshoorn, I'm incredibly grateful that people still want to see me perform live. I've also been spending a lot of time in the studio working on new material, and I'm really looking forward to releasing it soon.

MG You collaborated with your son, Zac, on *Walked On By*. What was that experience like, and can fans expect more collaborations or new musical directions in the future?



Like most of the great producers in the world, he simply walked through the door that morning to find me still awake and asked to hear the track. He then came up with two ideas of his own that he felt would make the song feel more complete.

I like to encourage creative thinking at home, so I had to try out his ideas, and, to his credit, he nailed it. I added his name to the credit sheet, and he was officially accredited as a co-producer on his first track. The experience felt very natural. He's incredibly talented in his own right, and I like to encourage him to walk his own path.

But I love the quirkiness of the situation: the 12-year-old telling his old man how it's done.

None of us knows if it'll ever happen again, or if he's even considering pursuing something like this as he grows up, so I'm just happy to look back on it with fondness for now.

“When people come to a show, I want them to leave feeling uplifted, inspired, and part of something bigger than themselves.”



Looking ahead, what's next for Mark Haze? Can fans expect any new music, live shows, or exciting projects over the coming months?



I'm working on new material that pushes my sound further into soulful territory, while keeping the rock edge alive. There are live shows lined up, and I'm excited to bring fresh energy to the stage.

Beyond that, I'm exploring creative projects & collabs that blend music with visual storytelling. So, fans can expect surprises!



“I never really want to stop learning. Sometimes, it’s the battle between wanting to change and wanting to stay the same that leads me to the sweet spot where I feel inspired to create new material.”

MARK HAZE







SEAFOAM GREEN, SERIOUS LES PAUL

The Gibson Les Paul Modern Figured takes one of the world's most recognisable guitars and brings it firmly into the modern world—with less weight, greater versatility and a finish you simply cannot ignore.



There is something reassuring about picking up a Les Paul. The shape is familiar, the feel is substantial and before you've even plugged it in, you already have a pretty good idea of what is going to happen when you hit that first big chord.

But then Gibson went and painted one **Seafoam Green**.

And strangely enough, it works beautifully.

The **Gibson Les Paul Modern Figured Seafoam Green** combines a lightweight mahogany body with a stunning AAA figured maple top. It still has that unmistakable Les Paul presence, but Gibson has made it a little friendlier for long sessions and gigs.

That modern thinking continues when you start playing. The SlimTaper™ neck gives the guitar a fast, comfortable feel, while the ebony fingerboard features a compound radius—comfortable for chords lower down and progressively flatter as you move towards the higher frets.

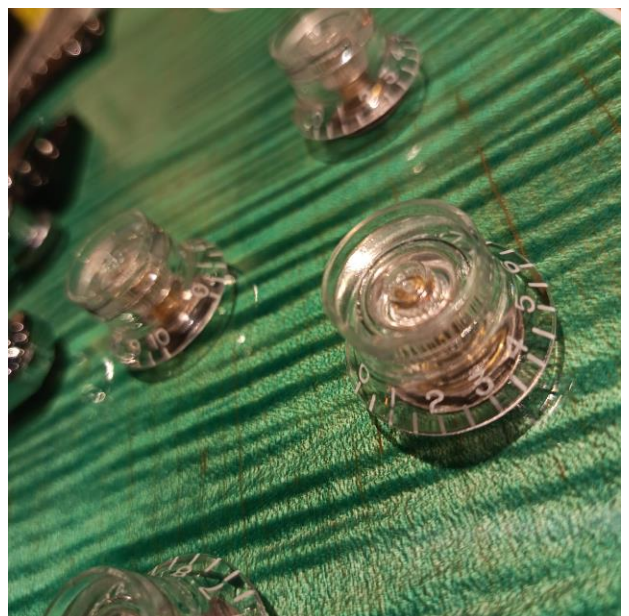
Add the Modern Contoured Heel and reaching those upper notes suddenly feels considerably easier.

Plug it in and you're reminded that beneath all these contemporary touches, this is still very much a Les Paul.

A pair of **Burstbucker™ Pro** pickups provides the muscle. The neck delivers warmth and richness, while the bridge brings clarity, bite and plenty of attitude. Coil-tapping expands the possibilities even further, allowing the guitar to move comfortably between rock, blues, pop and more contemporary sounds.

And that's really what makes this guitar interesting.

The Les Paul Modern Figured isn't trying to replace the traditional Les Paul. Instead, Gibson has taken that legendary formula and asked what today's guitarist might want from it.



It just feels as though somebody at Gibson asked, "What would we change if we designed the Les Paul for today's player?"

And then somebody else said:
"Let's make it Seafoam Green."
We're rather glad they did.



M E W Z O



BEFORE THE SHOW, YOU BUILD CONFIDENCE.

A musician's reputation begins before arriving on stage. Confirming requirements, sharing accurate technical information, understanding the audience and responding promptly all help clients feel confident about their choice.

EVERY PERFORMANCE CAN BECOME PART OF A LONGER STORY.



Repeat bookings grow from trust.

Keeping an accurate profile, fresh recordings, recent performance clips and clear availability helps previous clients return.



AFTER THE SHOW, YOU LEAVE AN IMPRESSION.

After the event, organisers remember more than the songs. They remember whether the artist arrived prepared, worked well with the venue, adapted when needed and made the booking process straightforward.



New clients gain confidence.

Organisers are more likely to make contact when they can see what you offer and know communication will be reliable.

BEYOND THE ENCORE



How does one performance create the next opportunity?

A memorable show can earn applause, but sustainable momentum is built through thoughtful preparation, clear communication and the professional experience surrounding the music.



Everything in one place.

Mewzo brings conversations, booking details and payments together, helping solo artists, duos and bands stay organised and turn each successful performance into a lasting professional relationship.

KEEP THE MOMENTUM MOVING

Preparation • performance • relationship



BUILD A REPUTATION CLIENTS REMEMBER

Every completed event adds to a musician's story. Clear communication, confirmed arrangements and successful bookings give clients more reason to return.

Mewzo helps musicians keep enquiries, event details and payments connected, reducing scattered messages and missing information that can weaken an excellent experience.

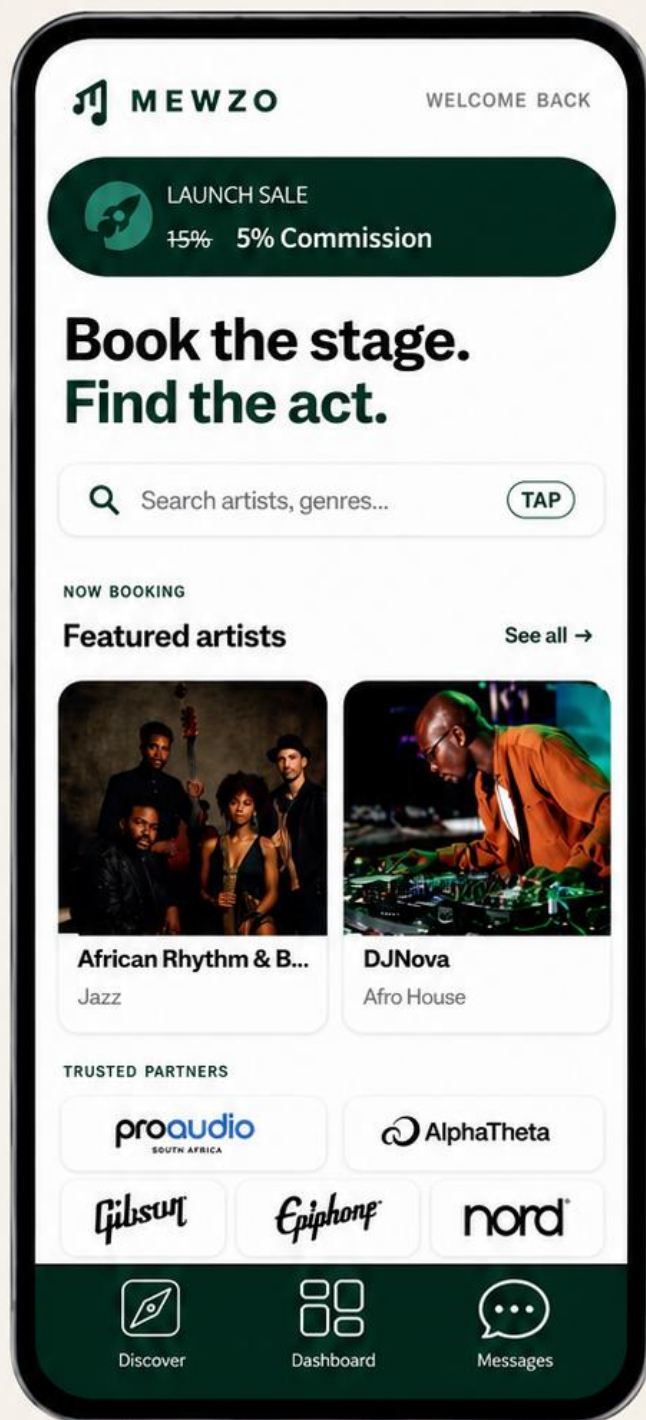
When profiles stay current, returning clients can review sound, location, recordings, act format and availability before making their next enquiry.



THE NEXT OPPORTUNITY MAY ALREADY KNOW YOUR NAME

Growth does not always begin with a new audience. It can start with a venue, organiser or client who already understands your value.

By making each stage of the booking organised and transparent, musicians can protect their reputation, strengthen relationships over time and across audiences and create more opportunities for repeat engagements.



EVERY PERFORMANCE CAN BUILD THE NEXT OPPORTUNITY.

KEEP YOUR PROFILE CURRENT • MANAGE BOOKINGS IN ONE PLACE



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Mewzo app



MARK BIAGIO

LIVING BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

For more than three decades, Mark Biagio has balanced life, work and an enduring need to create music.

As the driving force behind The Fismits, his songwriting draws deeply from relationships, family, loss and lived experience, with the guitar remaining at the heart of his creative world.

His latest EP, *Falling Joy*, brings songs originally written during his university years in the 1990s into the present, interpreted through decades of musical and personal experience.

We caught up with Mark to talk about *Falling Joy*, the evolution of The Fismits, his lifelong relationship with the guitar, the Gibson and Epiphone instruments that have shaped his sound, and why, after all these years, he still refuses to give up making music.





Welcome Mark, For readers discovering your music for the first time, how would you describe who Mark Biagio is, and what has continued to inspire you to create music after more than three decades?



Simply, I'm a husband, father, muso, sailor and software guy. I have no idea, honestly, why I still refuse to give up music after all this time. It must be a chemical imbalance that I was born with.

Buried deep inside is some need to create something and keep going. Not sure why the need has never pushed so hard that I went all in and abandoned the "day job", and conversely why the day job never forced me to abandon the music. I guess I've just adapted to live in the gap between the two worlds.

As I say this it feels a little like I've relinquished or succumbed or conformed, but it's not really like that.



Many of the songs on Falling Joy were originally written during your university years with Bruce Barrett and The Mind Theatre. What was it like revisiting music that has lived with you for so many years, and how did your perspective on those songs change over time?



It's not a case of revisiting. Fact is, when I pick up a guitar and someone say play a song, I usually will play a Mind Theatre song, fluently. If I must play one of mine, I must think a bit more. So, these songs have always been with me. They are that good, in any form, be it Fismits 2026 or TMT circa 1995.

Did my perspective change? Not sure, I can say that some song elements I did change, just because the 25-year-old performing those songs then is not the completely the same guy performing them now. It's kind of like Joe Strummer debating singing career opportunities after the band had made it.





The Fismits evolved from a collaborative band into your own solo creative outlet. How has that transition influenced your songwriting, production process, and the way you approach making music today?



Even though the Fismits was a band, I was still the key driving force behind it. What I lost in the transition was the ability to use the natural talents and styles of the guys in the band to realise my ideas.

Not sure how to describe it, but it's a bit like a chef having to cook a dish, but he's been given some strange ingredients he must use. So, you get creative. By myself the canvas is more blank, and although it is easier in some respects, it's also fraught with too many options.



Your music often explores themes of family, relationships, personal growth, and reflection. Looking back over your career, what experiences have had the greatest impact on the artist and songwriter you've become?



I think all of them are the only answer. When something strikes me, I write a song. In the early days it would have been a direct relationship or me fighting an invisible or visible enemy.

As life moves on, new things come to the forefront, for instance, long relationships have many seasons, and loss now seems to be starting to take centre stage. Luckily the enemy element has never left the building. There is always an enemy.



MG Your guitar work is incredibly expressive, moving effortlessly between atmospheric electric tones and intimate acoustic arrangements. What role does the guitar play in your songwriting process, and do different guitars inspire different creative directions?



The guitar is the instrument I write on and hence is critical. Although I love other instruments like horns and keyboards, a guitar in my music is front and centre. I will use the other instruments to blend into or reinforce the guitar. In my current song writing and producing ideas I need the guitar to almost be the singular vessel for the mood or emotion. It's an extension of me.

As to a guitar inspiring a process, I think it may be construed to be a bit cart before the horse. A specific guitar or tone can help complete the journey that one envisaged. It could perhaps unlock a few accompaniments or unlock other notes that the original idea may not have had, like an effects pedal.

I know on my track 'Scars', I had my Gibson Double Cutaway Les Paul with P90s and that opening chord, when played on any other guitar would not have made the mix, somehow, I just got so excited when I hit it.

MG You've spent many years playing and recording with Gibson and Epiphone guitars. What is it about these instruments that continues to inspire your creativity, and are there particular models that have become essential to your songwriting and recording process?



I think the song starts showing itself while it's getting written or created. Then you grab the guitar that best suits the part. All my guitars are distinctly different in sound and being able to just grab one off the wall is a very privileged thing to have at hand. My Epiphone Les Paul has been with me since around 1993, I can't exactly recall the date. It was not a high end, top of the range model in its day.

But it's been tweaked a little over the years, as things needed to be replaced, and it has established itself as my work horse both in the studio and live. It will travel to all gigs and be used as a primary on the power songs. However, it is so versatile and can be used on all the songs should one of the other guitars "have an episode". It also looks cool with the Bigsby, and I get to go all Neil Young with it.

Finally I got a "real Gibson" two years back, that double cutaway LP with P90's I mentioned earlier - nothing I own sounds like this guitar - so this opened up a whole new bunch of ideas when recording and with an E-Bow it's just mind blowing what comes out.



Whether you're in the studio or performing live, what qualities do you look for in a guitar, and how have Gibson and Epiphone helped you achieve the tones and expressive playing style that have become such a signature part of The Fismits' sound?



A guitar must just feel nice and easy in the neck but still can handle a big dig in and a heavy right hand. It also needs to always be in tune, when I pick it up it must be almost there or thereabouts even after a few weeks of not being used. I've always been a more rhythm-based guitarist and never wanted to be a lead guitarist. So, the tone needs to be full and round, front and centre.

In my early days I liked a heavy (weight wise) guitar - my Epiphone is heavy. I think this feeling of weight gave me an additional appendage that extended and unlocked other aspects of my personality. Now I must say the double cutaway LP is a much more enjoyable, weighted appendage, but still has that power feeling and brings out the "other mark".

I used it a lot on the new EP. The P90's, especially the neck pickup, really pops out if needed or can sit back in the mix happily amongst the other humbucker and single coil guitars.



PHOTO CREDIT: ETHAN BIAGIO



With Falling Joy bringing several long-held songs to completion, it feels like the closing of one chapter and the beginning of another. What's next for Mark Biagio and The Fismits, and what can fans look forward to in the months ahead?



We are starting to do a few more live shows again. I'm trying to find a new approach for gigs as I think the traditional Friday and Saturday night club, 60 min kick ass set thing is not working anymore. With the advent of so much fake stuff, I think there is an opportunity to make gigs more real, inclusive and special. I'm also working on new material.

As to when it gets released and the form it takes, I will have to see. Based on my output cadence, the end of 2027 for a new EP or something in that vein might be realistic.



THAT LES PAUL LOOK. WITH A FEW TRICKS UP ITS SLEEVE.

The Epiphone Les Paul Classic Heritage Cherry Sunburst looks beautifully old-school, but hidden beneath those familiar controls is a guitar with considerably more versatility than you might expect.



Some guitar finishes just belong on certain guitars.

And **Heritage Cherry Sunburst on a Les Paul** is definitely one of them.

The **Epiphone Les Paul Classic** gives you that instantly recognisable combination of a mahogany body, maple cap, cream binding and glorious sunburst finish. Strap it on and there is absolutely no confusion about the family this guitar comes from.

But don't let the traditional looks fool you.

At its heart are two open-coil **Alnico Classic PRO™ humbuckers**, delivering the warm, punchy sound that makes a Les Paul such fun when you plug it into an amp and turn things up. There's plenty of body from the mahogany, while the maple cap adds some welcome clarity and snap. Rock? Absolutely. Blues? No problem.

Big crunchy rhythm chords followed by an unnecessarily long guitar solo? That's practically compulsory.

But Epiphone has added a clever twist. The push/pull controls provide **coil-splitting and phase switching**, opening up sounds beyond the traditional two-humbucker Les Paul setup. Pull a control and suddenly you've got another flavour available without reaching for another guitar. That makes the Classic surprisingly adaptable.

The **SlimTaper mahogany neck** keeps things comfortable whether you're sitting on rhythm duties or wandering towards the dusty end of the fingerboard for a solo. A laurel fingerboard provides a smooth playing surface, while Grover® Rotomatic tuners with an 18:1 ratio help keep everything where it should be.

Down at the body, Epiphone's **LockTone™ Tune-o-matic bridge and stop bar** provide a solid foundation for good sustain, resonance and reliable intonation.

And that's probably the best way to understand this guitar.

It looks like the Les Paul you've known forever. It feels familiar. It gives you those big humbucker sounds you'd expect.



But when you start pulling those knobs, you realise the **Les Paul Classic** has a few **surprises waiting underneath that Heritage Cherry Sunburst**.

Classic on the outside.

Not quite so traditional once you plug it in.





SHAUN NARAINSINGH

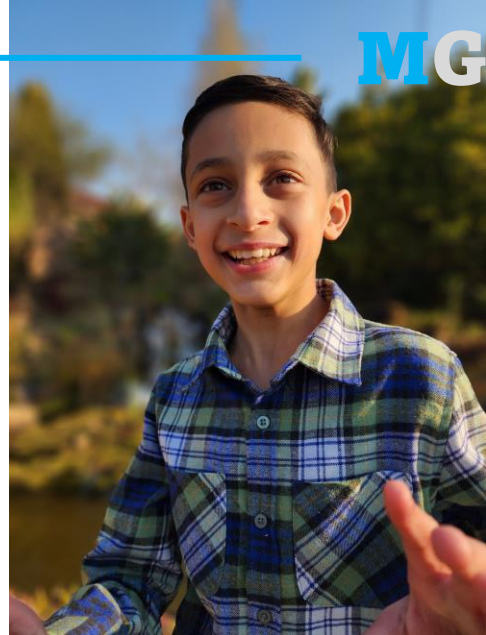
A YOUNG GUITARIST WITH BIG SOUND

For **Shaun Narainsingh**, the guitar journey only began about a year ago—and interestingly, it almost didn't begin at all.

Originally choosing drums, encouragement from his music teacher, Samuel James Naicker, led him to pick up a guitar instead. From that first experience, something clicked.

Inspired by the heavier sounds of Metallica, Pantera and Evanescence, Shaun has already pushed himself into challenging territory, tackling songs such as Metallica's *Creeping Death* and developing the discipline needed to master its relentless rhythm playing.

We caught up with Shaun for a quick chat about discovering the guitar, the musicians inspiring him and the dream of one day sharing a stage with Metallica.





When did you first start playing guitar, and what made you fall in love with it?



I had the opportunity to learn to play an instrument about a year ago and I originally chose the drums. My music teacher (Samuel James Naicker from Worship and Revival School of Music) suggested that I try the guitar instead and that's how I fell in love with it.

From the first time I played the guitar it felt right. I liked the rock and roll sound of the electric guitar and it made me excited every time I played it. After that, I also started playing the Bass and Acoustic guitars.



Who are some guitarists or musicians that inspire you, and what do you admire about their playing?



I am inspired by James Hetfield from Metallica, Dimebag Darrel from Pantera, Evanescence and Twenty One Pilots. James Hetfield makes Metallica sound exciting and Dimebag Darrel is a rhythm and solo guitarist and this is impressive because he performs both types at the same time.

I like Evanescence because of their heavy metal sound and the guitarists are very versatile. Twenty One Pilots only has 2 members but they still manage to sound like a full band and their music makes me happy and their lyrics are inspiring.



What is the most challenging song or technique you have learned on guitar, and how did you overcome it?



Creeping Death by Metallica. It was challenging at first because of its fast paced down picking rhythm in the riff. I found a way to overcome it by continuously practising until I could do it without struggling.



If you could perform on stage with any musician in the world, who would it be and what song would you play together?



It would have to be Seek and Destroy by Metallica. I think it's one of their best songs and I would be so excited to be able to be on stage with them.





SOMETIMES SIMPLE IS BETTER

The Gibson Les Paul Special Vintage Cherry strips the Les Paul idea back to its essentials: mahogany, two P-90s and a whole lot of character.



Not every great guitar needs to be complicated. Some instruments became classics precisely because there wasn't much standing between the player and the sound.

The **Gibson Les Paul Special Vintage Cherry** comes from exactly that school of thought.

Originally introduced in 1955, the Les Paul Special keeps things wonderfully straightforward: a slab mahogany body, 50s-style mahogany neck, rosewood fingerboard and two P-90 pickups. More than 70 years later, that simplicity still makes enormous sense.

The mahogany construction gives the guitar its solid, resonant character, while the traditional neck and rosewood fingerboard provide an unmistakably old-school playing experience. The gloss nitrocellulose Vintage Cherry finish completes a guitar that looks every bit as classic as its heritage suggests.

But the real fun starts when you plug it in.

The **dual P-90 pickups** sit somewhere wonderfully between worlds. Dig into the strings and they can become raw, aggressive and full of attitude. Back things off and there's warmth, clarity and surprising subtlety. Rock, blues, indie, alternative or punk—the Special has plenty to say.

That straightforward philosophy continues with a classic wraparound bridge, Vintage Deluxe tuners and hand-wired controls with Orange Drop capacitors. Everything feels purposeful, without adding complexity simply for the sake of it. And perhaps that's why the Les Paul Special has endured.

In a world of increasingly complicated guitars, there's something refreshing about an instrument that simply says: **Here are six strings. Here are two P-90s. What can you do with them?**



Sometimes you
don't need
more guitar.

You just need
the right guitar.

MG

A photograph of Don Felder, a member of the band The Eagles, performing on stage. He is wearing a black leather jacket over a dark t-shirt and white pants. He is playing a white double-neck electric guitar. The background is dark with stage lighting. The name "Don Felder" is written in a large, stylized, metallic font across the bottom of the image.

Don
Felder

proaudio

TWO NECKS, ONE SONG AND A PIECE OF ROCK HISTORY

When “Hotel California” became too complicated for one guitar, Don Felder turned to Gibson—and created one of rock music’s most recognisable guitar partnerships.

There are certain guitars that become inseparable from a song. For **Don Felder**, it’s the Olympic White **Gibson EDS-1275 doubleneck** and the song is, of course, *Hotel California*.

Interestingly, Felder didn't choose the doubleneck because it looked spectacular on stage. He needed it to solve a problem.

When *Hotel California* was recorded, Felder says the arrangement contained around **13 or 14 different guitar parts**, using both six- and 12-string guitars. His 1959 Gibson Les Paul Standard featured on several layers, while the 12-string added another important part of the song's distinctive sound.

That worked perfectly in the studio. Playing it live was another story.



Felder needed to move between six- and 12-string parts without constantly changing guitars. The solution was a **Gibson EDS-1275**, with its 12-string and six-string necks combined into one rather magnificent instrument.

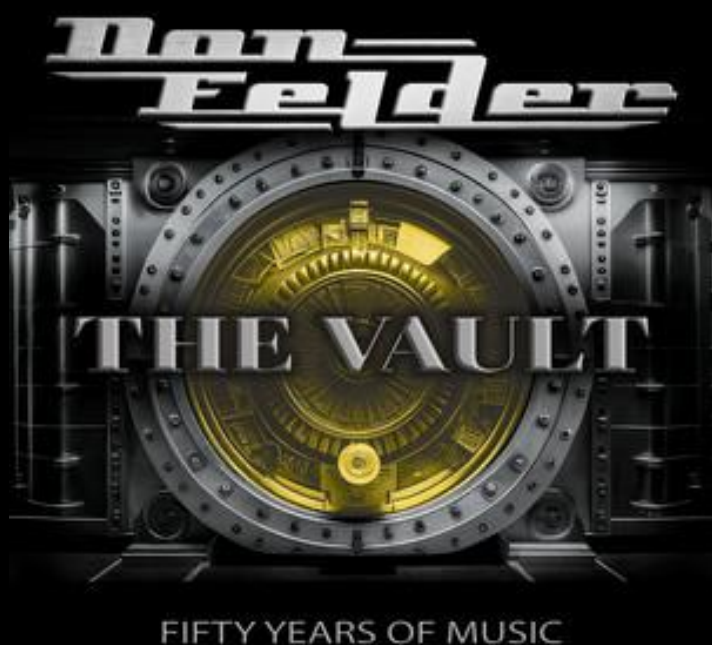
But there was another problem. On the recording, the 12-string had been sent through a rotating Leslie speaker, while the six-string needed a conventional guitar amplifier.

Inspired by something he'd seen country legend Chet Atkins do, Felder modified his Gibson with **two separate outputs**, allowing each neck to be sent to a different signal path.

Suddenly, the giant white doubleneck wasn't simply impressive to look at—it allowed Felder to bring much more of the complex studio arrangement of *Hotel California* onto the stage.

That's what makes the story so interesting. Great music gear isn't always about having more technology. Sometimes it's simply about solving a musical problem.





Decades later, Felder and his white EDS-1275 remain closely connected with one of the most famous guitar songs ever recorded.

And he's still creating. His album ***The Vault – Fifty Years of Music*** grew from rediscovered recordings and unfinished ideas, some reaching back to **1974**, the year he joined the Eagles.

Rather than simply releasing old demos, Felder developed them into something new.

Perhaps that's fitting for a guitarist who has spent a lifetime figuring out how to make musical ideas work.

And whenever those opening chords of *Hotel California* ring out and Felder is standing behind that enormous white Gibson, the guitar isn't simply there because it looks cool.

It's there because the song needed it.

"The Gibson double-neck I play is not an off-the-shelf model. I have to have them modified, where the switch is switching between the outputs of the two necks."

*Don
Felder*



MG



Don
Felder

proaudio



ONE PICKUP. ONE KNOB. ZERO APOLOGIES.

The Epiphone 1963 Firebird I proves that sometimes the most exciting guitars are the ones that give you less to think about—and more reason to turn the amp up.



There are guitars that arrive with enough switches, knobs and pickup combinations to keep you occupied for an afternoon.

And then there's the **Epiphone 1963 Firebird I Heather Poly**.

One pickup. One volume control. One tone control.

Now go make some noise.

That's part of what makes this guitar so appealing. The Firebird has never exactly been a shy instrument. Its long, sweeping body shape looks like it arrived from somewhere in the future—even though Gibson first introduced the design more than 60 years ago.

Finished here in gorgeous **Heather Poly**, the Epiphone 1963 Firebird I somehow manages to look vintage, elegant and slightly rebellious all at once.

But there's much more happening underneath that shape.



That simplicity continues with the **Wraparound Lightning Bar bridge**, while vintage-inspired Kluson planetary “banjo-style” tuners add another unmistakably Firebird detail.

Underneath those gold reflector knobs are hand-wired controls with CTS potentiometers and a Mallory capacitor.

So while the layout may be simple, what's underneath certainly isn't cheap.

And that's really the charm of the Firebird I.

It isn't trying to be the guitar that does absolutely everything. It gives you a great piece of wood, an unusual construction, one excellent pickup and two knobs—and then leaves the rest of the equation to your hands, your amplifier and your imagination.

The included **Inspired by Gibson Custom hardshell case** means it's ready to travel too, which feels appropriate because this is not a guitar that deserves to spend its life hanging quietly on a wall.

The Epiphone 1963 Firebird I is wonderfully uncomplicated, unmistakably different and just a little bit strange.

One pickup. Two knobs. Six strings. What else did you really need?





The guitar uses a **nine-ply mahogany and walnut neck-through-body construction**, with mahogany wings forming the rest of the body. Instead of simply attaching the neck to the body, the central neck structure runs through the instrument, helping create the resonance and sustain that have become such an important part of the Firebird personality.

Then we get to the really interesting bit.

There's only **one pickup**—so Epiphone made sure it was a good one.

A **Gibson USA Firebird mini humbucker with Alnico 5 magnets** sits at the bridge, delivering a bright, articulate voice with plenty of clarity and bite. Push an amp and it can become aggressive and wonderfully rock 'n' roll. Clean things up and there's considerably more detail and character than you might expect from such a beautifully simple setup.

There's no pickup selector to worry about because, well... there's nothing to select. Just play.

Few electric guitars have left a mark on music quite like the Les Paul. Decades after its introduction, its unmistakable design continues to inspire musicians around the world.

Through its modern lineup, Epiphone celebrates that legacy by offering instruments that honour the past while embracing the needs of today's players.

The Evolution of the

Epiphone

Les Paul



The story begins with the Les Paul Special, which traces its roots to the mid-1950s. Staying true to its heritage, today's Epiphone Les Paul Special combines a vintage-inspired design with dual P-90 PRO™ pickups, delivering the distinctive tone that has made it a lasting favorite.

Les Paul Special
EILP-TV
TV Yellow

From there, the journey moves to the Les Paul Standard '50s. As part of Epiphone's Inspired by Gibson Collection, it pays tribute to the golden era of the Les Paul with vintage-inspired appointments, a traditional neck profile and ProBucker™ pickups.

It captures the look, feel and character that helped establish the Les Paul as one of the world's most iconic electric guitars.



Les Paul Standard 50s
EILS5-VS
Vintage Sunburst



Les Paul Standard 50s
EILS5-HS
Heritage Cherry Sunburst



Les Paul Standard 50s
EILS5-EB
Ebony

As the Les Paul evolved, Epiphone expanded its versatility with the Les Paul Classic, introducing coil splitting, phase switching and a treble bleed circuit for greater tonal flexibility.

Building on this evolution, the Les Paul Modern adds contemporary performance features, including an asymmetrical SlimTaper™ neck, a contoured heel, Grover® Locking Rotomatic® tuners and advanced electronics, delivering modern playability while preserving the iconic Les Paul character.



Les Paul Classic
EILO-EB
Ebony



Les Paul Classic
EILO-HB
Honey Burst



Les Paul Standard 50s
EILS5-EB
Ebony



From its vintage-inspired beginnings to its modern performance-focused designs, the Epiphone Les Paul has continued to evolve while staying true to its iconic heritage. Whether you're drawn to classic tones or contemporary versatility, today's lineup proves that some legends only get better with time.

MG

SWIFF
AUDIO

DIGITAL WIRELESS SYSTEM

Cut the Cable,
Keep the Tone

proaudio



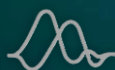
Wireless guitar systems have become an essential tool for musicians looking to move freely on stage without compromising sound quality.

The Swiff Audio WX-501 Digital Wireless System is designed to deliver exactly that—a reliable, low-latency wireless connection that lets players focus on their performance rather than their cables.

Four selectable
wireless channels



105 dB
dynamic range



Signal-to-noise
ratio <105 dB



Less than 0.02%
total harmonic
distortion (THD)



Verified Customer Reviews

"The sound? Flawless, with no interference despite active pickups."

"The sound is uncoloured compared to a cable. No noise or crackling."



10-Hz – 20kHz
Frequency Response

5.8GHz Digital
Wireless Transmission

5 Hours Battery Life

Standard 6.35
mm (1/4") Jack
Compatible

30-50m Wireless
Operating Range

Ultra-low
Latency >5ms

Rechargeable
lithium batteries with
USB-C charging

Whether you're performing live, rehearsing with your band, or simply looking to eliminate cable clutter at home, the Swiff Audio WX-501 Digital Wireless System offers a dependable wireless solution without compromising sound quality.

Combining low-latency digital transmission, USB-C rechargeable batteries, and broad instrument compatibility, *it provides the freedom to move while keeping your performance front and centre.*

What's in the BOX?



X1 Transmitter
X1 Receiver



X1 Dual-head
Charging Cable



X1 User-manual



BUILT FOR THE VOICE. READY FOR THE STAGE.

When the band gets loud and the room gets louder, the **Audio-Technica AE6100** is designed to keep one thing exactly where it belongs—your vocal out front.

A live vocal microphone has a fairly simple job on paper.

Capture the singer, keep everything else under control and survive whatever happens on stage.

In reality, that's a pretty big ask. The **Audio-Technica AE6100** is built specifically for that environment. It's a hypercardioid dynamic handheld microphone designed to deliver a strong, articulate vocal sound even when surrounded by guitar amps, drums, monitors and a stage full of noise.

The hypercardioid pickup pattern focuses tightly on the vocalist while rejecting much of the sound coming from elsewhere. That isolation can make a real difference on a busy stage, helping the vocal cut through the mix while reducing the potential for feedback.

And because singers don't generally stand perfectly still holding a microphone like it's a laboratory instrument, Audio-Technica has paid attention to handling noise too.

The AE6100's back-cavity assembly essentially “floats” inside the handle, working with its anti-shock engineering to reduce the bumps, movement and vibrations that inevitably happen during a performance.



It's also built to take some punishment. This is very much a working microphone rather than something that needs to be treated delicately between songs.

The rugged construction makes sense for touring musicians, venues, churches, rehearsal rooms and anyone regularly setting up and packing down equipment.





Audio-Technica even includes its **Quiet-Flex™ stand clamp**, threaded adapter and protective pouch, so it's ready to become part of the gig bag from day one.

And perhaps that's the best thing about the AE6100.

It doesn't need to be complicated.

Plug it in. Step up to the mic. And sing.

NORD STAGE 4 COMPACT: BIG STAGE, SMALLER PACKAGE



The Nord logo, featuring the word "nord" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font with a registered trademark symbol (®) to the upper right, set against a solid red rectangular background.

The Nord Stage 4 Compact takes an enormous collection of pianos, organs, synths and effects and squeezes them into a wonderfully playable 73-key instrument built for musicians who actually perform.



The name **Compact** might suggest that Nord has trimmed things down. Spend a few minutes with the **Nord Stage 4 Compact**, though, and you quickly realise that compact refers more to the size than the possibilities.

Its 73-key semi-weighted waterfall Triple Sensor keyboard gives players a great middle ground. It's comfortable enough for piano work, fast enough for organ playing and particularly well suited to musicians who regularly move between sounds during a performance. Aftertouch adds another level of expression without taking your hands away from the keys.

And that's really what the Stage 4 is about—**playing rather than menu diving**.

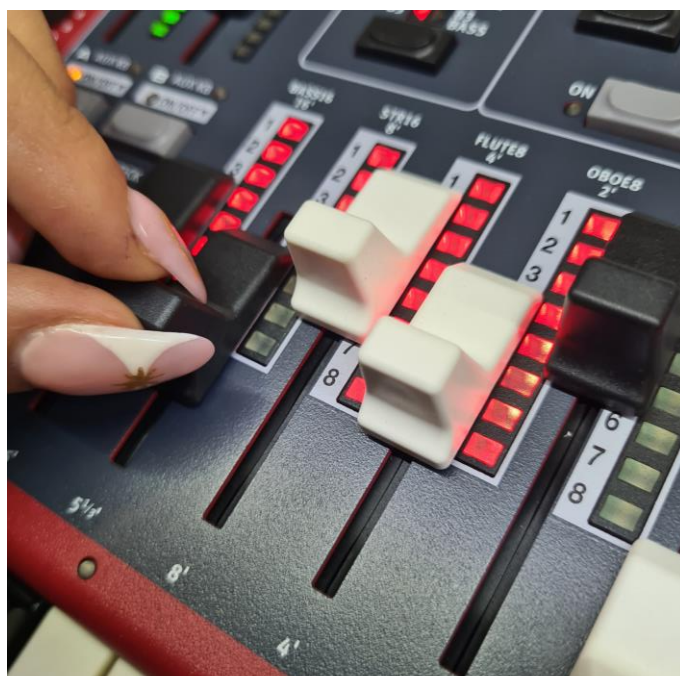
The redesigned panel puts plenty of control directly in front of you, with dedicated LED faders for each layer. Building combinations of piano, synth and organ sounds becomes part of the performance rather than something you need to prepare three menus deep.

The piano section brings Nord's excellent collection of grands, uprights and electric pianos, together with String Resonance, Dynamic Pedal Noise, compression, Unison and useful Timbre presets.

Then things get considerably more adventurous.

The synth section uses the **Nord Wave 2 Synth Engine**, with three independent layers, expanded sample memory and sounds enhanced with features including Tru-Vibrato, Unison and Round Robin. Add the advanced arpeggiator and there's plenty of room to move from subtle pads behind a piano to sounds that can take over the entire stage.

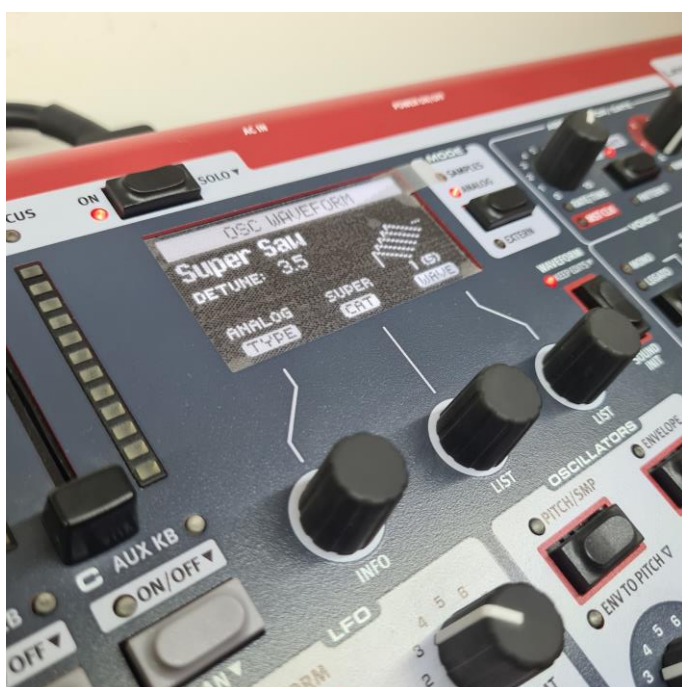
Organ players haven't been forgotten either. Nord's B3, Vox/Farfisa and Pipe Organ simulations are here, but on the Compact you also get something particularly satisfying: **real physical drawbars with LED indicators**. Grab them, move them and shape the organ while you're playing. That's exactly how it should feel.





And because one effect across an entire setup simply isn't enough fun, the Stage 4 provides **dedicated effects for each layer**.

Spring, Booth and Cathedral reverbs join new modulation options, while Spin, Pump, Flam and Space Delay give you plenty of opportunities to get creative.



One feature we didn't touch on is just how performance-friendly the Nord Stage 4 Compact is when moving between sounds. Its Layer Scene function lets you prepare two different layer combinations within the same program and switch between them instantly, while seamless transitions allow sustained notes to continue naturally when changing programs.

You can also divide the keyboard into up to four zones, with adjustable crossfades between split points, making it possible to build sophisticated live setups without abrupt changes between sounds. It's the kind of feature you might hardly notice from the front panel—but on stage, where everything needs to happen smoothly and quickly, it can make a huge difference.



Seventy-three keys may be compact. What you can do with them certainly isn't.

MG

SCHOOL OF ROCK®



SCHOOL OF ROCK

JENNI-LYNNE GRIFFITH

ETHAN KRIGE

XANDER VENTER

PLAY.
PERFORM.
BELONG.

NOW OPEN IN
SANDTON



LESSONS IN
GUITAR, BASS,
DRUMS, KEYS
& VOCALS



BAND
REHEARSALS
& LIVE
PERFORMANCES



BUILD CONFIDENCE,
MUSICIANSHIP,
CREATIVITY &
STAGE EXPERIENCE



PROGRAMS FOR
KIDS, TEENS
& ADULTS



DRUM ROOM



BAND ROOM



INSPIRED SPACES



BASS ROOM



VOCAL & KEY ROOM

★ MORE THAN
MUSIC LESSONS.
IT'S A MOVEMENT. ★

INSTRUMENTS. PASSION. COMMUNITY. PERFORMANCE.
THAT'S THE SCHOOL OF ROCK EXPERIENCE.

Learning an instrument is one thing.

Learning what it feels like to make music with other people is something completely different. At **School of Rock Parktown North and School of Rock Sandton**, students are encouraged to move beyond practising alone and experience music the way it was meant to be played—together.

Individual tuition builds the skills, but rehearsals, bands and live performances are where those skills really come alive. Students learn to listen to one another, find their place in a song, develop confidence and discover the excitement of stepping onto a stage.

For **MusicGear Magazine**, we caught up with a few of the students who are experiencing that journey for themselves. They may play different instruments and have very different musical ambitions, but they share something important: a genuine love of music and a desire to keep learning.

In the conversations that follow, we discover what brought them to music, what they hope to achieve and, perhaps most importantly, **why they keep coming back to play.**





No, You Rock.

JENNI-LYNNE GRIFFITH

MY MOMENT IS NOW

Some musical journeys begin a little later than others, but that doesn't make them any less exciting. Jenni-Lynne Griffith picked up a guitar for the first time at 51, proving that there really is no expiry date on discovering something you love.

Now learning both electric guitar and bass at School of Rock, Jenni-Lynne has found more than a place to learn an instrument—she has discovered a supportive community, the experience of playing in a band and a new way of expressing herself through music. Her message is beautifully simple: “I don't feel like I have missed my moment. My moment is now.”

MG
JLG

What instrument do you play, or do you sing?

I am learning to play the Electric Guitar and Electric Bass

MG
JLG

What is one musical skill you would love to master?

I'm definitely a late bloomer when it comes to music. Music has always been a huge part of my life, even though I only picked up a guitar for the very first time at the age of 51.

I've always had a pretty good ear for music — give me the intro of a song and I can often tell you the song and the artist within seconds. My lifelong dream, though, has always been to play the drums. Unfortunately, having a drum kit at home isn't exactly practical, so the guitar became my instrument of choice!

I've been playing guitar for about a year and a half now, and partway through 2025 my instructor suggested that I give bass guitar a try. Of course, that resulted in me buying a bass! So, if I could master one musical skill, it would probably be playing the drums. Perhaps one day I'll finally live that dream and become a drummer too.

MG
JLG

What is your favourite thing about being part of School of Rock?

It is so welcoming, and feels like part of a community, we are all learning here and everyone encourages one another. The instructors are fantastic, everyone is so kind and even on a bad day things just feel so much better after being at School of Rock. Being part of a band was initially daunting for me, but being part of the band has helped me strive to do better and practice harder

MG
JLG

What is one thing you hope to achieve through music?

I want to turn my love for music into my own voice and I want to show that its Never to late to follow your dreams and achieve a sense of freedom and self-expression, I don't feel like I have missed my moment, my moment is now.



ETHAN KRIGE

MAKING MUSIC THAT PEOPLE CAN FEEL

For Ethan Krige, music is about more than learning notes. As a pianist and singer, he wants to use music to express his emotions, write his own songs and ultimately create something that makes other people feel good too.

At School of Rock, Ethan is also discovering the joy of playing alongside other young musicians, building friendships and experiencing what it means to be part of a band.

His goal says it best: *"I want to make people feel happy and be drawn into the music when I sing and play."*



MG What instrument do you play?

EK I play piano and I sing while I play.

MG What is one musical skill would you love to master?

EK I would like to master the piano and be able to use music to express my emotions and write more of my own songs

MG What do you enjoy most about School of Rock?

EK I get to be immersed with other kids in a band and build friendships while we play

MG What is one thing you hope to achieve through your musical journey?

EK I want to make people feel happy and be drawn into the music when I sing and play.



XANDER VENTER

TURN IT UP

For Xander Venter, the guitar is more than an instrument—it's his way into a world of music, creativity and some seriously big guitar sounds.

Armed with his blue chameleon Ibanez GRX40 and inspired by the legendary playing of Eddie Van Halen, Xander is developing his skills and confidence at School of Rock, while discovering just how much fun being part of a band can be.

For Xander, the journey is as important as the destination: *"I want to build lasting friendships, create amazing memories, and enjoy every step of the journey."*

WE DON'T TEACH MUSIC TO PUT ON SHOWS

RO

MG What instrument do you play?

XV I play guitar, and my weapon of choice is a stunning blue chameleon Ibanez GRX40. It's more than just an instrument to me, it's my gateway into the world of music and creativity.

MG What is one musical skill would you love to master?

XV I would love to master Eddie Van Halen's legendary finger-tapping technique. The speed, precision, and pure energy of his playing are incredible, and being able to pull off those iconic riffs would be a dream come true.

MG What do you enjoy most about School of Rock?

XV Learning to play guitar, being part of a band, making great friends, and experiencing the amazing vibe are what I love most. Going to School of Rock every Thursday is the highlight of my week. I'm incredibly grateful that we found this awesome place where I can learn new skills, grow as a musician, and share unforgettable experiences with a fantastic group of friends who love music just as much as I do.

MG What is one thing you hope to achieve through your musical journey?

XV My goal is to become an exceptional guitarist and continue growing my confidence and skills along the way. Just as importantly, I want to build lasting friendships, create amazing memories, and enjoy every step of the journey as I work towards success in music



Pioneer Dj  **AlphaTheta**

 **audio-technica** **dBTechnologies**



MIDAS



SONANCE
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LAB.GRUPPEN  **SOUND TOWN**

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Guitars

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Are you mixing with the right company?