

GUITAR GIRL

MAGAZINE

I BELONG:
HIGHLIGHTING WOMEN
AND NON-BINARY
ROCKSTARS OF COLOR

guitargirlmag.com
July 2021 | \$14.50

SPECIAL EDITION

CELISSE
APRIL KAE
GENNY JAM
IMANIGOLD
SUNNY WAR
ALENA CIERA
CHENA ROXX
TASHA MARIE
DEEKAH ROX
MELANIE JAG
ZANDY MOWRY
MORGEHENNA
DIVINITY ROXX
CURLEY HENDO
JOY PRATCHER
ALIAH GUERRA
NETTA SHERRELL
JENNALE ADAMS
THE TXLIPS BAND
GHETTOSONGBIRD
SIKIVU HUTCHINSON
CÉCILE DOO-KINGUÉ
SHEVONNE PHILIDOR
LINDSAY LOVE-BIVENS
PHOENIX VAN DER WEYDEN
ISIELLE JOHNSON, AKA "ICE"
ASHILEE ROBERTS, AKA "ASHILEE ASHILEE"

Guitar
GABBY

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April
KAE

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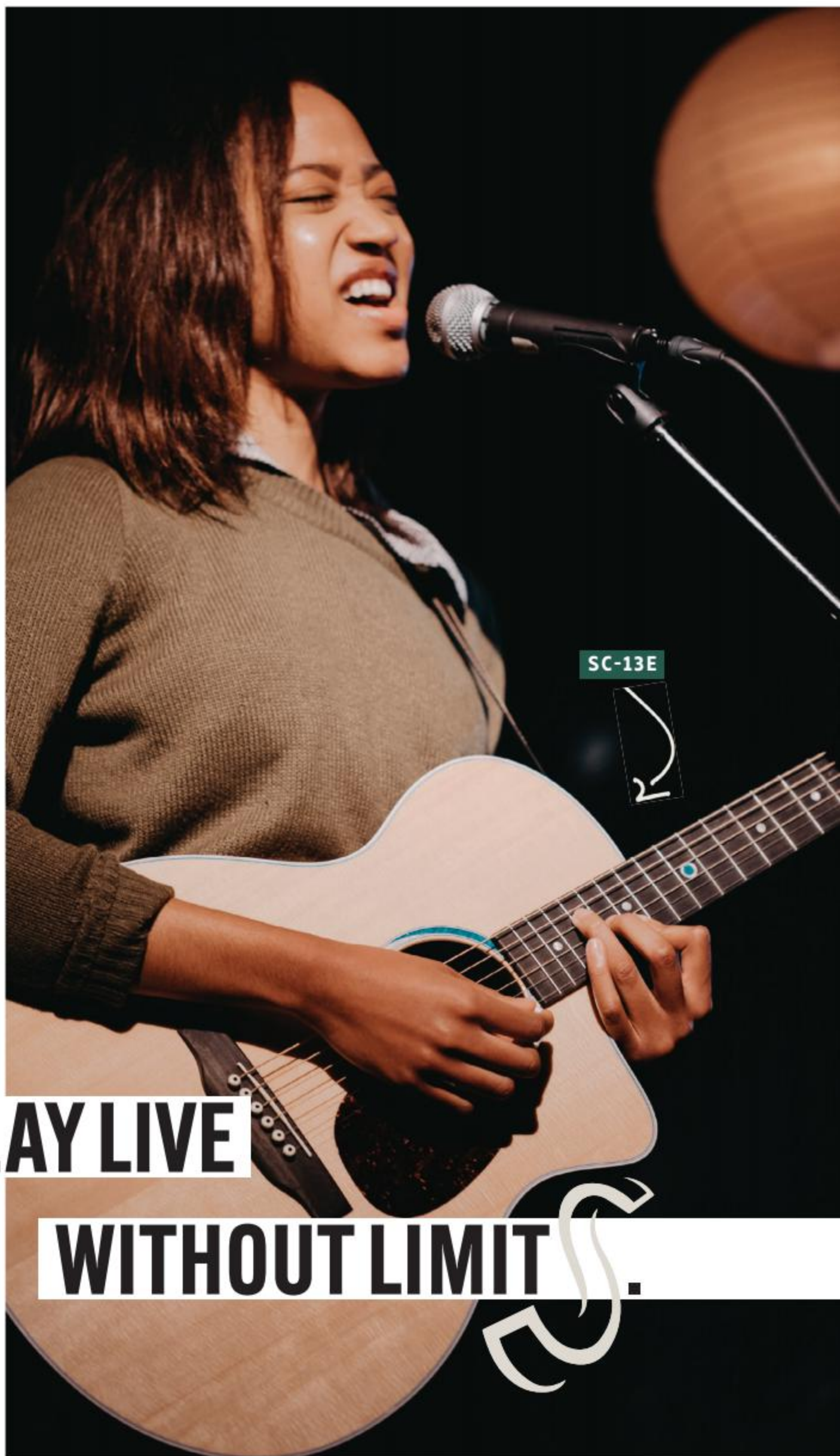
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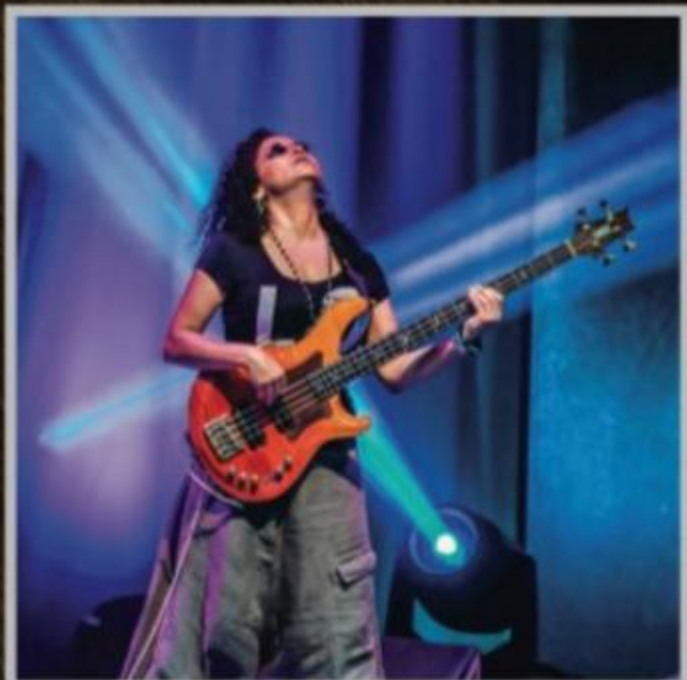
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Letter from the Diversity EDITOR

I am elated to premiere *Guitar Girl Magazine's* first edition dedicated to highlighting women of color in the music industry. It is an honor to have this as my first major contribution to a platform that was specifically created for women by women.

Since being a kid, I have been passionate about using my music and voice to connect those around me and connect people to the commonalities we all have with each other. From working in the business side of the industry, to the legal field, to the talent of creating music itself, the interviews in this issue give a glimpse into the backgrounds and artistry of various female musicians and entrepreneurs around the globe who have set out on their own paths to inspire.

Historically, women of color have been left out of the narrative and have been excluded from having a "seat at the table." Within recent years, the notion of BIPOC women existing in non-inclusive spaces has shifted, and now, companies such as our issue partners PRS and Gibson and more are taking a genuine step in addressing the industry gap of diversity and inclusion.

Guitar Girl Magazine was started with the intention to empower women to pursue their calling and dreams. From Sister Rosetta Tharpe to Peggy Jones, aka Lady Bo, to Elizabeth Cotten. Calling attention to the women who came before us is necessary for the future. In this issue, we sit down with musicians of various backgrounds and cultures to celebrate the diversity of a universal language—music. We talk to some of the TxLips Gang, the collective members of my international Black female touring collective, the TxLips Band, and learn how their individual parts contribute to the overall mission of representation for girls and non-binary musicians of color.

We hear the story of Joy Pratcher, an attorney who started her career by stepping out onto a limb of faith and made one phone call that would forever change her life. Lindsay Love-Bivens, one of Taylor Guitars' staff, shares her story about how God moved things in her life to put her on a path she didn't know she would be on. The moving stories of all these diverse women of color are inspirational, and I hope you feel the same after reading through this edition.

We are moving into a new era of GGM and need the continued support of readers like you. We are appreciative of your support and looking forward to seeing you in our next edition.

Guitar Gabby

Gabriella "Guitar Gabby" Logan
Diversity Editor, Guitar Girl Magazine



GUITARGIRLMAG.COM
SPECIAL EDITION
"I BELONG!"
Ju Ly 2021

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J. Frederick Robinson

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ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

PEGGY JONES,

AKA LADY BO

Peggy Jones, aka Lady Bo, was born and raised in Harlem, New York City.

She played guitar in Bo Diddley's band until 1961, when she left to focus on her own band, the Jewels. Her spouse, Wally Malone, also played in Bo Diddley's band on the bass guitar.

She contributed guitar and vocals on Bo Diddley's "Road Runner" and "Hey! Bo Diddley" and "Aztec," but her contributions were often mistaken for being Bo Diddley.

She was one of the first, if not the first, female lead guitarists in rock and roll.

More than just a backup singer, she made scatting while shredding look effortless. She often would switch between rhythm and lead guitar without hesitation. It was rare to see a guitarist do this at the time.

Apart from her ability to seamlessly play the guitar and sing, she was eventually recognized for her value in his band for her dancing and managing the money since Bo trusted her the most.

Quote: "I don't think I went in with any attitude that 'Oh, oh, I'm a girl, they're not going to like my playing.' So probably that might have been my savior because I just went in as a musician and expected to be accepted as a musician."

Quote: "Little did I know that a female playing any instrument was like a new thing. I was breaking a lot of barriers."

She passed away at the age of 75 in 2015.

Sources: Wikipedia;
Music is Her Passion

RECLAIMING HISTORY:

OUR NATIVE DAUGHTERS DOCUMENTARY RECAP

Premiered on Monday, February 22, 2021, on Smithsonian Channel on behalf of CMT Equal Play and the Smithsonian Channel

As seen on GuitarGirlMag.com on February 22, 2021

BY J. Frederick Robinson



Photo by Smithsonian

“
WHEN A PERSON
WRITES A SONG,
IT’S NEVER IN A
VACUUM.”

Amythyst Kiah’s words that bring us into *Reclaiming History: Our Native Daughters* act as a manifesto; a statement of dissolution to the pervading myths of the Black American, the Black woman, and the American experience simultaneously. *Reclaiming History: Our Native Daughters* documents the creation of the Americana/folk album *Songs of Our Native Daughters*, an album of tremendous artistry and craft that will leave listeners with mouths wandering for words, lungs bereft of breath, and eyes heavy with rushing tears. This documentary is, in every sense of the word, a reclamation.

Our Native Daughters is a collaboration of talented artists Rhiannon Giddens, Amythyst Kiah, Leyla McCalla, and Allison Russell. Acting as the narrators throughout the documentary, they seamlessly weave the insight, personal experience, and unexplored history that inspired the lyrics for this album of original work, except for one Bob Marley cover, done in partnership with Smithsonian Folkways. Though they are all accomplished artists individually, this endeavor proved more kismet than serendipitous as the documentary makes an irrefutable case that only these four women could have produced such a work of timely and masterful storytelling.

Rhiannon tells the story of the arresting moment that would become one of the key inspirations for the project – a trip to the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C. She encountered a poem “Pity for Poor Africans” by English poet William Powder. In the stanza that left Rhiannon paralyzed, he wrote:

“[I am shock’d at the purchase of slaves]

...but I must be mum, for how could we do without
sugar or rum?”

Allison puts it so perfectly that this poem is an indictment and satire of the moral sophistry used to justify slavery.” She describes the parallels between American slavery and the off-shore slavery used for the goods and products we consume, in excess, daily that is explored in the song “Barbados,” written by Rhiannon. The melody of “Barbados” scores the narration in a somber hum, but the moment Allison states that the melody is the first recorded melody of the enslaved, it becomes haunting and sobering. If you believe in “the ancestors,” you will rejoice in the conjuring that is “Barbados.”

The documentary does more than tell the extraordinary backstories to the songs, but it gives an honest account of the history of the banjo, and other string instruments, centered genres.

“you’re going to play some hillbilly country music, as a Black woman. What the f*ck is wrong with you?”

Leyla, who is of Haitian descent, has both an American and Haitian connection with this instrument. The *Creole Banjo* was the first recorded banjo found in Haiti in the 1840s (other research goes as far as 1600 Jamaica and Suriname) but made its way there from the western ports of Africa via the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Leyla pulls from a popular Haitian refrain in “Lavi Difisil.”

The common impression is that folkAmericana music was created by, and some would suggest

that it should only be played by, white people. This film shows us this is far from the truth, but the majority of people are unaware that this was an intentionally constructed myth. Allison's interpretation is that banjo music began as impoverished music played by both Black and white people but got adopted by wealthy white people to monetize. It then became "hillbilly music" and "race music" with popular fiddle competitions that excluded Black players, so it became "white," and once the recording industry was born, it "recorded this transition and reinforced it."

Throughout this detailed storytelling, images of the enslaved families, slave auction newspapers, and blackface minstrel advertisements are shown. Just as it is common that many people view banjo/fiddle/folk music as "white," to other people, Black people specifically the twang of the banjo is synonymous with blackface, racism, violence, and death. Even though we are too young to have been a witness to these horrors, the sound alone is an ancestral trigger.

The artists believe this association, this shame, is why Black people are so scarce in these genres. I will have to admit, once the first twang and strum left the speakers, my stomach turned. It harkens horror deep within me. But after watching this remarkable work, I was left proud. I left with a connection to a sound that I was once repulsed by—afraid of. It was like being reunited with a long-lost family member

The concert footage shown throughout displays more than just their sheer talent and charisma as performers, but their emotional connection to the music, their personality, their humor, and their want for "healing." They say the stage is a "healing place" and that healing is palpable from the crowd. Panoramic shots show a sea of rural white faces, those I would never think would accept nor be entertained by four Black women playing folk music, but to watch them explode from their seats, many in tears, in roaring applause left me speechless. Amethyst tells a story of how an uber-conservative father listened to "Black Myself" and said, "you know what? I've never thought about the perspective of a Black person," and that the song made him rethink some of his beliefs. When music is both this beautiful and impactful—it is special.

On *Reclaiming History: Our Native Daughters*, the themes of race, class, sexism, gender roles, culture, and history of the transatlantic slave trade are synthesized into a melodic bright red heartbeat. Allison Russell recognizes how *Our Native Daughters* stand in the tradition of the West African griot—the storytellers. "I understand, on a very deep level, how important music and storytelling was for our ancestors—to survive." Though there is trauma, the humans from these songs aren't defined by their struggle but by their humanity. This project gives witness to the reclamation of self of power, of joy, of pride, of humanity of culture, and to the reclamation of American history.



Amythyst Kiah told a crowd of thousands, "This is America's history. All of us have ancestors who have partaken in string-band traditions, and that's what this record is about. It's about looking back at a difficult past that all of us have been traumatized by and really listening to these stories and thinking about—what can we do to be better as a society and as humans."

Frederick Robinson is a writer from San Francisco who has been featured in multiple online publications. Currently, he is in the process of releasing a book focused on profiles of the unseen hospitality figures from the south side of Chicago under the creative collaboration, *The Prism Project*. Follow him on Medium.com.



Danyel Smith brings the music of Black female creatives to the forefront through her newly launched podcast via Spotify and The Ringer *Black Girl Songbook*. Smith is a journalist known for her work in various high-level editorial positions with well-known media outlets *Billboard* and Vibe Media Group—becoming the first African American editor of *Billboard* magazine and the first female editor of Vibe. And her credits don't end there—she's written for major outlets, Rolling Stone, Ebony, NPR, Time, and Cosmopolitan, to name just a few

Through this podcast, Smith celebrates and uplifts the talents of Black women in the music industry' in conversations with songwriters, producers, and musicians. Tune in for insights into Black girl's songs with new episodes uploaded every Thursday.



Photo by Anna Hedges

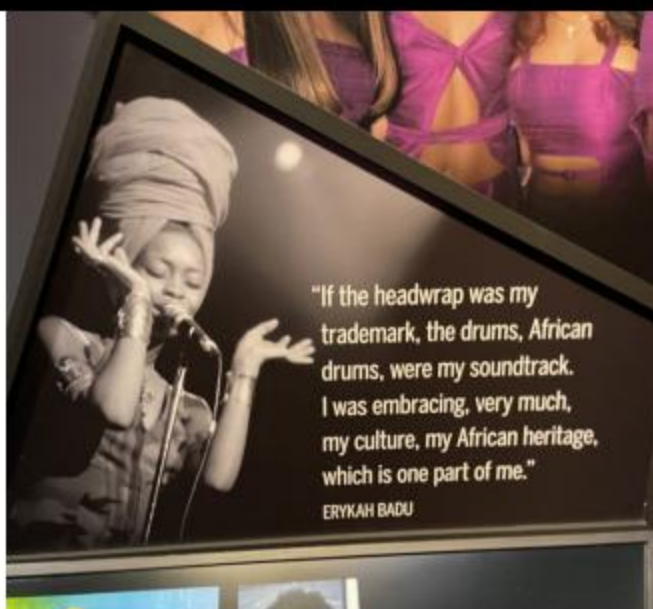
Amythyst Kiah on the documentary *Reclaiming History: Our Native Daughters*

You were involved in the documentary *Reclaiming History: Our Native Daughters*. Can you share with us your experience working with Rhiannon Giddens, Leyla McCalla, and Allison Russell on this important piece of work?

It was unexpectedly spiritual in that I was in a room with four other Black women in folk music, a genre in which we typically find ourselves to be the only Black people in the room. By recalling the stories of the transatlantic slave trade and the havoc it wreaked on Black people, we realized that we were telling the stories of our ancestors' survival. It was equally tragic and triumphant—the four of us are standing on their shoulders. They allowed us to have the careers and lives we live today. It's incredibly humbling.

In the documentary, you stated, "It's about looking back at a difficult past that all of us have been traumatized by and really listening to these stories and thinking about – what can we do to be better as a society and as humans." What do you feel are some steps people can take to become better humans?

It can be something as simple as listening to each other and reflecting on our own behaviors. It's really the self-reflection part that is a challenge for most people. In Western culture, there is this idea that we are invincible and that we need to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps and toughen up. If you ask for help or if your feelings are anything but positive, then you're viewed as too sensitive, and your feelings are invalidated. Humans are capable of doing extraordinary things, but we are fragile. The sooner people realize that the better off we will be—



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSIC IS OPEN FOR BUSINESS IN NASHVILLE



It's been a long time coming. The National Museum of African American Music held its virtual ribbon-cutting ceremony on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Hosted by NMAAM President and CEO H. Beecher Hicks III, government officials and community leaders joined in. Inspirational messages from donors and partners of NMAAM were offered, followed by Kane Brown singing "Stand By Me" and Willie Jones performing his new single, "American Dream."



Showcasing over fifty music genres and African American music styles from its roots to the modern-day, it is the only museum today bringing forth this important history. The various galleries offer film, photographs, artifacts, clothing, and other objects telling the story of music from the early 1600s to today.

We had a chance to visit the museum and take in the beautiful venue and the history and richness of the music and artifacts within its 56,000 square feet. Upon entering the wide, open-spaced lobby area, there is one wall of instruments painted all white, which is quite breathtaking. Once you have paid your entrance fee, you are given an electronic tag that can be used throughout the museum to download music. After viewing a short presentation on the history of Black music, you enter the exhibit area, which offers different galleries showcasing the progression of Black music and notable artists in each genre. Music and videos of various artists are playing and instruments, clothing, albums, and various artifacts belonging to famous artists fill the galleries and provide a unique insight into the background and history of Black music.

The museum is now open with limited capacity. Plan your visit at nmaam.org.

In August 2020, country singer-songwriter **Rissi Palmer** launched her radio show *Color Me Country with Rissi Palmer*, with the number one goal being to highlight artists of color who have been marginalized in mainstream country music. Some of her unique guests include Andrea Williams, Brittney Spencer, Cam, Chapel Hart, Crystal Shawanda, Darius Rucker, Maren Morris, Mickey Guyton, Miko Marks, and more. *Color Me Country* airs live every other Sunday on Apple Music Country.

Palmer graced the Opry stage for the first time in 2007 followed by multiple appearances in 2018. Her discography includes her eponymous debut album in 2007 (which included Billboard Country charting hits "Country Girl," "Hold On To Me," and "No Air") followed by an EP, *Country Girl*, in 2008, a children's album, *Best Day Ever*, in 2013, two EPs in 2015 titled *The Backporch Sessions* and 3, and her latest album *Revival* in 2019.

The country singer-songwriter returned to the Opry stage for the first in thirteen years on March 19, 2021. "It's always special to perform at the Opry," says Palmer. "I am so excited to return with a renewed sense of what it all means to me as an artist."

The Country Music Hall of Fame recognizes Palmer's contributions to country music in this year's *American Currents: State of the Music* exhibit designed to promote creatives that have recently made significant contributions to the country music industry. "This honor came as such a shock, and I am humbled to be thought of," explains Palmer. "The fact that it's for doing my radio show is just an added bonus!"



Photo by Chris Charles

NIK WEST SHARES HER JOURNEY ON INSTAGRAM

From Nik West Instagram @nikwestbass:

"When I started on this journey of becoming a musician, I never thought it would play out this way. I stumbled into music because it was the one thing that everyone warned me against.

I heard things like because you're a black woman, you'll have to work twice as hard to be thought of half as good and you'll still be paid less. I also heard that I'll need to put the bass down and play guitar instead or just sing in order for the world to "get you". You'll never make money.

All of this came from music industry pros. Doing everything they wanted me to do kept me BROKE and discouraged. One day I decided to take FULL CONTROL of my career. I used what they thought were "weaknesses" and turned it into my assets... a Culture ADD. I wanted to inspire other women

to pick up the bass professionally And that I deserve to be paid what I'm worth. So I worked for it. On my own. Without "them".

The glow up is REAL yeah I don't have a million followers. yeah my songs aren't on the biggest hit radio stations. And yeah, I haven't won Grammys (I've never submitted) but I'm a self made millionaire. And here's the secret... Social media likes don't make you real money, but building real relationships in the real world does. Negotiating for what you're worth does, giving people an EXPERIENCE during your live shows does, working on your skills does, doing YOU better than anyone else can does.

If social media was wiped out today, would people remember you? Have you impacted them in a way that affects them in real life? Are you authentically you? If so, your tribe will always find you. Keep going. BeyOU. Be SMART. Be unique. ❤️"

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INSIDE THE INDUSTRY

LINDSAY LOVE-BIVENS:

YOU BELONG IN THE ROOMS YOU ARE IN

BY Guitar Gabby

California native Lindsay Love-Bivens has always wanted to work in music, but she didn't always plan on becoming a guitarist. Falling in love with the instrument at the age of 12 has led to over 15 years working for Taylor Guitars, starting in final assembly and working through multiple titles until now, where she serves as the Artist and Community Relations Manager.

In her interview, Love-Bivens talks about her favorite guitars, what working for a guitar manufacturer has taught her about her life as a guitarist, and what it's like to be a woman in a male-dominated industry. She also shares advice on getting started as a woman in guitar manufacturing, what she wishes she knew at the start of her career, and how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected her creatively.

Please tell us your name, where you are from, and what you always wanted to be when you were growing up.

My name is Lindsay Love-Bivens. I was born and raised in San Diego, California, and for as long as I can remember, I have always wanted to be in the music industry. I wanted to be anything and everything from an artist to an artist manager. In fact, for my senior project in high school, we had to pick our dream careers, do research on the positions, find out average salaries, create a budget, find a place to live, etc., and present it to a panel. My dream career that I presented was artist relations for a record label.

Let's talk about how you started playing the guitar. How long have you been playing, and what is your favorite thing about the connection between the player and the instrument?

I began playing guitar at the age of 12. It started out as a punishment from my dad for being kicked out of a concert band in 7th grade, and I just fell in love with the instrument. I think my favorite thing about the connection between a player and a guitar is the ability to fully express yourself and play in different ways.

What is your current go-to Taylor guitar that you like to play?

Right now, that would be the GTe urban Ash or Builder's Edition 517e.

Shifting gears to you working at Taylor Guitars, tell us a little bit about how you came to join the Artist and Community Relations management team.

So I have a unique, fun history with the

company. I started in final assembly in 2005-2006. I then had the opportunity to train with the repair manager at the time and began doing production repairs for final assembly until I left in 2012. I had moved out of state, and during that time, I was doing music full-time, played in bands, and was a creative arts director and worship pastor at a church in Michigan. My husband and I moved back to San Diego in 2016 to start a church, and I rejoined the Taylor team in 2018. I worked in the repair department, and there I assessed and diagnosed customer guitars. Last year, I started working with our artist relations team. I had been in communications with our Director of Artist and Entertainment Relations and a few others on our executive team. I offered suggestions and observations regarding our artist program, which turned into creating my role (Artist and Community Relations Manager), and I'm loving every minute of it.

How did you learn to repair guitars, and 1) what joy do you have in that part of being a guitarist, and 2) what challenges (if any) you have faced being a woman in that specific space inside of the guitar manufacturing industry?

Having the one-on-one time with the now Service Manager at Taylor really taught me how to level frets, fix cracks, all of that stuff. I learned a lot, and I find joy in the process of being able to work on my guitars and even my friends' guitars and tune them in. Spending time with the instrument and really dialing in on it.

Well, first off, I will say that the industry as a whole is a male-dominated industry. So, to sum it up, one of the biggest challenges I



Photo by Nguyen Photos

have faced in this career is credibility. There were often times that customers would bring their guitars to the shop and ask to speak to a repair manager, and they were often shocked that that is my job. Establishing credibility has always been a challenge in this male-dominated industry.

What qualities do you believe young women need to have as they enter the music industry?

I would say having a strong work ethic, a willingness to learn, and the ability to move forward after failing. Even if you make mistakes, remember that they are opportunities to learn rather than losses.

What are three things you wished you would have known early on in your career?

Don't let the fact that you're a woman in a male-dominated industry diminish your voice and contributions. Your experience, your voice, and your ideas matter—and they're needed. You belong in the rooms you are in. Trust yourself.

What advice would you give young emerging businesswomen that want to work in similar spaces you are in?

Same advice as above. Also, ask a lot of questions. It's okay to not know everything; you aren't expected to. And I would say, connect with other women.

How has dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic affected you in the creative sense?

COVID has caused me to reach into my creative toolbox to find different ways to be creative. I do a lot of the production and video work at my church, so trying to figure out how to get more creative with livestreams and being more intentional in the digital space. It took a minute because like a lot of people, I had moments of being uninspired. But once I got my inspiration, I was excited to go.

Have you had moments in life of being uninspired?

yes. I had moments in life for three years or so where I was not in the most creative space. I didn't feel very motivated to create anything. One thing that helped was listening to other creatives in the industry to see how they fared with this. Their advice was to find another artistic way to express yourself and to step out of your comfort zone. It's different but will challenge you. I started getting into more video editing and photography, which helped me get out of that uninspired space. 🎨

“

COVID HAS CAUSED ME TO REACH INTO MY CREATIVE TOOLBOX TO FIND DIFFERENT WAYS TO BE CREATIVE.

Photo by Nguyen Photos



Elizabeth Cotten taken during the early/mid-'80s in NYC taken by Sherry Rayn Barnett

Widely remembered for her everlasting tune "Freight Train," Elizabeth "Libba" Cotten was an American blues and folk musician whose impact can be heard within the soulful strumming of The Grateful Dead and Americana essence of Bob Dylan. Cotten was born in 1895 and passed away at the age of 92 in

1987. Recognized as a "living treasure" by the Smithsonian Institution, Cotten was a self-taught, left-handed guitarist whose unique strumming was later trademarked as "Cotten picking." After being discouraged by her church during her teenage years to discontinue playing what they considered to be the work of the devil, Cotten respected

their wishes and put down the instrument. She went on to marry and have a child and would later on only occasionally play at church. It wasn't until 25 years later that she would revive her love of the instrument.

Cotten's first album wasn't released until she was 62 years old. Despite the late professional start, and due to the folk revival of the 1960s, Cotten toured throughout the U.S. playing shows the likes of the Newport Folk Festival ("The Kingston Trio Lineup, Biography"). Before her passing in 1987, Cotten received a GRAMMY for Best Ethnic or Traditional Folk Recording; she was 90 years old at the time.

INSIDE THE INDUSTRY

JOY PRATCHER:

ROOTED IN WHO YOU ARE

BY Guitar Gabby

Joy Pratcher knows exactly who she is. The Queens-born attorney has used the skills that make her great at law to work her way through the music industry, starting by landing an internship with Puff Daddy through a cold call at just 17 years old. Since then, she's worked as Senior Director for EMI Music Publishing and now has her own business. As part of that business, Pratcher runs a sound production studio, works as a consultant for small businesses, and produces her podcast, *Unexpected Success*.

In her interview, Pratcher discusses growing up in New York, working for Puff, and her journey through the music industry. She shares what it takes to be a young woman hoping to break into an industry like music and advises on the importance of maximizing your time management.

Please tell us your name, where you are from, and what you always wanted to be when you were growing up.

My name is Joy Pratcher, and I am from Queens, New York. Growing up, I was always advocating for people. Whenever I would have friends that would get bullied in school, I was in their corner. I always wanted to help people. My mom saw this inside of me and always pushed me to follow my passion. I wanted to be an attorney because of my amazing ability to argue and persuade people, which eventually led to me becoming an attorney.

At the age of 17, you made a phone call that sparked your journey in the entertainment industry. Tell us about what prompted you to make a call to Bad Boy Records and what you learned from working there at a young age.

Wow, I can't believe that it's been almost 30 years since that moment. I remember being around 16 years old and seeing an usher feat. Puffy music video on The Box, a "street station" on cable TV that played music videos nonstop. When I saw Puffy, I said to myself, "I will work for that guy one day." At the time, my high school extended externships for students who wanted credit to graduate, so I decided to heavily pursue uptown Records and Bad Boys. I made a phone



Photo by Tatiana Teo

call one day, and I spoke with the then General Manager, Kirk Burrowes, and told him I wanted to work for free. I arrived for my interview (which lasted all of seven minutes), when Puffy comes walking in. Kirk told him, "This is our new intern." From there, my journey started.

It was an amazing experience to be in that space as Junior M.A.F.I.A. and Faith Evans would often visit our offices. I learned so much from that job that really taught me a lot of professionalism and kickstarted my career in the entertainment industry.

What qualities do you believe young women need to have as they enter the music industry?

Honestly, Gabby, in anything you are in, you have to be strongly rooted in who you are. It is definitely tough because when you are young, you are unsure of yourself and can get tripped up by things and people along the way. I am raising two young girls, so I am a firm believer that we all serve a divine purpose, and being rooted in that will guide you.

This business is extremely misogynistic, and people will try you in all ways, but if you know who you are and what you represent, no one can change that. There will always be people that will shame you, but you have to be firm in who you are and stick by that.

What are some challenges you have faced by being a woman in a male-dominated industry?

This is something that is pretty common in my life. Coming from classes where most of my classmates were white, I had to learn how to navigate through it. I went to Hampton University, so I did have a delightful undergraduate experience being amongst other "only's" that were also familiar with figuring out how to work through it. We worked together to learn how to leverage our "otherness."

I think the thing that helped me the most was realizing that my differences are powerful. While some people may treat you differently, we carry a lot of knowledge and power, and as long as you are focused and strategic on learning how to leverage your otherness, there is opportunity for so much creativity in how you add yourself to spaces that typically aren't meant for us.

Let's talk about your position as Senior Director for EMI Music Publishing. You credit this experience as "a key to your growth as a businesswoman." Why do you credit this experience as a key growth moment in your journey, and what were a few things that you learned along the way?

This was the first and only experience in a truly



Photo by Tatiana Teo

“ I AM AN ADVOCATE OF GETTING A GOOD PLANNER TO MAKE SURE YOUR SCHEDULING IS PRECISE.

corporate environment. EMI exposed me to how this music business is really set up. As an intern, you learn to figure out where you are on the totem pole; the same thing for entertainment law. The corporate environment is different because you learn how little the artists really make in the grand scheme of things. It opened my eyes in so many ways because I learned a lot about strategy and execution. One thing I learned was that you can make anything happen when you plan how you want to meet your goals and then find the right people and activate them to help you work towards the end goal. Realizing this really empowered me to change the world, but it's impossible to navigate without the full picture. Unless someone lets you in to see the scope of it all, you won't know.

What is one piece of advice that you would give to young girls that are watching you and look up to you as they start their own journey?

I think it's important to know your transferable skills. Whatever you love to do needs to be the compass. I knew that I was good at helping people, and I always wanted that to be the constant, so I learned to take the skill of helping and advocating for others and transfer

it into the course of each of my careers over the years.

One piece of advice that I would give is whatever you are doing, be sure to let your passion guide you. You can change the world no matter what you do! Fulfilling your passion is important. There will be long strides of making no money, so you do have to be okay with not making any money upfront; but as long as you continue to find value in other things in life, you will eventually secure your bag.

What time management advice would you offer to maintain a healthy balance?

I think deciding the hours of the day I will actually work. I can do a lot of work between the hours of 5 a.m. and 4 p.m. you have to know when you are most productive and aim to get a lot done during those blocks of time.

I am an advocate of getting a good planner to make sure your scheduling is precise. It can be easy to get unorganized in anything you do, so ensuring you are together will help keep you on a tight schedule.

Lastly, put your phone down! Don't spend all of your life watching other people's lives on an app. Take time for yourself; that's the most important thing. —

Elizabeth Douglas, better known as **Memphis Minnie**, claimed her title as Queen of Country Blues by beginning her 200-song recording career in the 1920s. Minnie was notorious for outplaying the boys while simultaneously presenting herself in fancy dresses and a flawless face of makeup. Always evolving, Minnie took her traditional southern blues style and transitioned to Chicago, where she became one of the first performers to plug in and go electric.

Remembered for her storytelling lyrics and impressive guitar picking skills, Minnie is credited as an important contributor towards the R&B and rock and roll genres. Though a massive inspiration for men and women alike, female musicians such as LaVern Baker, Maria Muldaur, Bonnie Raitt, Rory Block, and Tracy Nelson have credited Minnie as a trailblazer who greatly influenced their careers.



Photo in public domain



Photo Courtesy of Artist

INSIDE THE INDUSTRY

SIKIVU HUTCHINSON: AN AUTHOR HIGHLIGHTING ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF BLACK FEMALES

BY Guitar Gabby

Winner of the 2020 Harvard Humanist of the year, **Sikivu Hutchinson** started her writing career with short stories and plays. Born to a journalist and teacher, her passion for writing was nurtured from a young age, opening up doors for her robust career many years into the future. She is passionate about the representation of Black girls and uses her skills to shine a light on the underrepresented Black women rock stars that came before us.

Hutchinson's *Rock 'n' Roll Heretic: The Life and Times of Rory Tharpe* talks about the life of the legendary Sister Rosetta Tharpe, a Black queer woman electric guitarist, who paved the way for many to come.

Tell us your name, where you are from?

My name is Sikivu Hutchinson, and I was born and raised in Los Angeles.

What did you want to be when you were growing up?

Growing up, I really wanted to be a writer and a teacher. My dad was a journalist, and my mother was a poet who also taught English. So being exposed to those two industries opened up my eyes to paths that I could take.

What got you into writing at your beginning stages? And how many books have you written?

I started off writing short stories, books, and plays in elementary school. Because I grew up around my parents' respective industries, I ended

up publishing six books and have written eight thus far in my career.

You recently came out with a book called *Rock 'n' Roll Heretic: The Life and Times of Rory Tharpe*. Tell our readers a bit about the book and what made you want to focus on paying homage to the legendary Godmother of Rock and Roll, Sister Rosetta Tharpe?

Well, Sister Rosetta Tharpe is a seminal figure in rock, blues, and gospel history, and she has never fully received the recognition she deserved. She was an innovator with her guitar distortion techniques, she was a queer artist and champion of experimentation, and she's been endlessly imitated/ripped off and underappreciated within white corporate rock.

My novel is a homage to the trajectory of her life as a working musician and cultural force. It weaves back and forth in time from the Great Migration era to the Carter administration, yoking together flawed, badass, unorthodox Black women who defy respectability and represent different aspects of cultural memory. As a protagonist, Rory Tharpe is loosely based on Sister Tharpe, but she deviates from her arc insofar as she eschews organized religion entirely, pursues life on the road with an all-male band in the disco-heavy late seventies, struggles to recover from addiction and childhood sexual abuse while fighting for her publishing rights in the shadow of Reaganism's rise. She is also grappling with the ageism of American society and a music industry that deifies youth.

As an amateur guitarist, I was initially motivated to write the book out of my lifelong ride-or-die love for all types of rock music (from Son House to Rosetta to Memphis Minnie to Band of Gypsies to Sonic youth to Neil Young to Jimi Hendrix to Arthur Lee to PJ Harvey to Parliament-Funkadelic to King Crimson to you, Malina Moye, and Brittany Howard). I was also interested in exploring the theft of Black creativity by corporate America and the minstrelsy of white women rockers like Janis Joplin, who continue

to reap dividends from exploiting (i.e., as rock historian Reebee Garofolo once said, "Black roots, white fruits") and building empires on the backs of Black women.

One of the novel's central themes centers on the artistic travails of Black women rendered invisible by the genre's association with alpha-male whiteness in the post-British invasion era. I wanted to explore the everyday challenges, failures, and quiet triumphs of being a Black female guitarist playing dive bars and middling concert halls. I was fascinated by the day-to-day grind of keeping a band together and the bills paid within the context of a post-civil rights America, where racist, homophobic evangelicalism is on the rise and rock is cratering as a commercially viable genre.

Why do you think this book and the history behind Sister Rosetta Tharpe are important now more than ever in the music industry?

I think it's important for Black folks and people of color overall to know that rock music was founded by African American visionaries who came from a long line of African diasporic creators and artists. Battling racism, Jim Crow terrorism, and white appropriation, these folks literally "found a way out of no way." Blues, rock, and country guitar innovation was deeply embedded into Southern Black culture from the early 20th century into the Vietnam era (and, of course, continues to resonate today in countless genres). It's troubling that rock music is viewed as a white male-inspired genre in the 21st century and that younger Black audiences are not being introduced to blues music. Recently, the ultimate irony and insult of this paradox was a 2019 "Top Ten Blues Artists" list by MusicRadar that included no Black women and three Black men. I also think it's critical to amplify Black women's self-determination in multifaceted ways, particularly vis-à-vis racist/sextist stereotypes that Black women don't play electric guitar and older Black women are creatively/socially expendable.

Describe the feeling you get when you complete the final draft of a book. What does that accomplishment feel like?

It's an exhilarating and scary feeling. It's analogous to the Sisyphean feat of rolling a boulder up a steep hill, pausing to bask for a brief second, then seeing it roll down again. A first draft is an embryonic glimpse into what the book can be pre-revision. Revision and editing are the ugly, bloody, gut-wrenching core of the novel-writing process. Being mentally prepared to take that journey requires a lot of inner strength and constant coaxing.

What is your book writing process? Talk us through ideas to draft.

I typically have a snatch of an idea about a historical/cultural phenomenon or figure. I'll mentally map out character voices and rhythms, then start tinkering with dialogue on the page—generally in longhand. I'm a big advocate of longhand for capturing the physicality and flow of character dialogue. Most of my first drafts have unfolded through simple longhand on pads, post-its, and journals. For the first draft of a book, I'll combine writing with research (books, articles, internet, interviews, music) and reading other novels, short stories, and non-fiction. It's important to keep the imaginative eye engaged with other works as well as the plod of everyday conversation, observing folks in different walks of life, ingesting idioms, slang, off-the-cuff speech, neologisms—I draw from anything and everything to make inner monologues and dialogues “pop.”

All artists have spaces that they feel most creative in. What does that look like for you? Describe your writing space.

My writing spaces are fairly conventional—I write at a desk on my laptop during the day and transition to an armchair during the evening. I always like to take a pad with me in public spaces so I can write if I have to wait for something.

How do you develop the titles of your books?

I like evocative titles that are enigmatic, edgy, and allude to tension, controversy, or contradiction within the book's thematic structure. The title of my first novel, *White Nights, Black Paradise*, referred to the self-destructive rituals of the Jonestown, Guyana, colony (a settlement created by the San Francisco-based Peoples Temple church, which perished in 1978 in what was considered to be the largest mass murder in U.S. history before 9/11) and the yearning for a Black utopia, which was embodied in the predominantly African American membership of the Peoples Temple church. *Rock 'n' Roll Heretic* has a double meaning. It refers both to the protagonist's religious skepticism and rejection of faith as well as her disruption of traditional rock norms.

What do you do when you have writer's block? Do you ever have writer's block?

I don't get writer's block, per se. Rather, I have the typical moments of indecision and frustration when a character, passage, or image fails to blossom into a coherent narrative. When that happens, I generally push through. Sometimes I'll listen to music or try to come up with an alternative way of accessing a description by using the five senses (especially taste, sound, and smell) to break down the idea I'm trying to convey.

What is one piece of advice you would give to any young kids or adults that are following after you and want to pursue a career in writing?

It sounds like a cliché, but fiction writing (and publishing) really is a marathon, not a sprint. Developing discipline and persistence takes time, and being able to have enough confidence in and conviction about the value of your work amidst the noise of haters, naysayers, and “doubting Thomases” (not to mention one's own self-doubt) can be a tall order. Given the intersections of racism, sexism, and other isms, I think it's important for Black women and girls to find mentors and role models who can help them navigate the challenges of being marginalized, underrepresented, and underestimated in the arts.

The erasure of Black women's cultural production is also magnified by the triple burdens we shoulder with respect to disproportionate responsibility for childcare and caregiving within the context of inequitable workplaces. For example, the *New York Times* estimated that nearly 89% of novels published by major houses in 2018 were by white authors. That is staggeringly egregious. This has a lot to do with the white supremacist engine of acquisitions, editing, and marketing that dominates the publishing industry. This is why many women of color have turned to independent publishing. Publishing independently not only allows authors to maintain control over their work but to keep more revenue while marketing and promoting their books in the way they see fit.

Writing can be isolating, painstaking work. Editing, revision, and having the capacity to accept constructive criticism are essential. I find reading across genres (newspaper articles, essays, novels, short stories, blogs, reports, plays, comic books, you name it) is also a big engine for creative imagination and accessing character rhythms, backstories, interiority,

and volatility. I'm eternally fascinated with how writers establish the interior lives of their characters in all their ugliness, contradictions, tragic flaws, strength, frailty, cruelty, and compassion.

So, my principal advice for young writers is to trust your voice. Be the most dogged, unwavering, take no prisoners champion for your work. One of my favorite quotes on the revolutionary potential of writing for Black women artists is from Alice Walker, who said: “In my own work, I write not only what I want to read—understanding fully and indelibly that if I don't do it no one else is so vitally interested, or capable of doing it to my satisfaction—I write all the things I should have been able to read.” *Rock 'n' Roll Heretic* is the book I always wanted to read and see (which is why I'm adapting it into a play to debut at this summer's Hollywood Fringe Festival). —



Photo by Zorrie Petrus

GABRIELLA LOGAN, *aka* **Guitar** **GABBY**

Leading the Charge for Diversity and Inclusion
Within the Music Industry

BY Tara Low

Gabriella Logan, aka Guitar Gabby, has been tapped to lead the diversity and inclusion efforts here at *Guitar Girl Magazine*. Not only a musician, Gabby is also a graduate of Vermont Law School, and she puts that combined knowledge to work in navigating the music industry.

Influenced by Black creatives before her, Gabby has made it her mission to use her passion for music and law to create a platform for young women and non-binary musicians to learn more about the music industry and to be a voice for Black women.

Gabby is the founder, manager, lawyer, and lead guitarist/vocalist of the collective the TxLips Band. Gabby tells us in a previous interview, "I saw a large gap in the music industry and wanted to do my part in filling that gap by creating a platform strictly by and for Black women that would allow us to tour and play music as much as we love without having to give up the other mandatory hats that women have to wear in life."

You've been recently tapped to help with the diversity efforts here at *Guitar Girl Magazine*. What does that role mean to you, and what do you hope to accomplish as the Diversity Editor?

It means a lot to me because growing up, I, like many other girls and women out there, did not see myself and others being represented in the press the way we should be. From a young age, I knew I wanted to be a part of changing this within the industry; I just wasn't sure how. It wasn't until I was an adult that I realized how the severe lack of representation affected me. I took a personal vow to make sure I did my part to change that within the industry, and I am so thankful to be able to do that from multiple sides of the industry. I am helping to direct the narrative of how Black women are represented in press,

especially with this magazine, because I do believe that the platforms by which we encourage and uplift women are important, and having a platform that is by women for women is important to me.

As the founder of the TxLips Band, can you share with us a little about your background in music and forming the group, and also talk about its mission?

yes! So I started this collective by playing in a music video for former Crime Mob member Diamond. It initially was just supposed to be one music video, but it turned into her need for a backing band, so I worked with her manager at the time and started the band. Shortly after, I began managing the band, which led to me starting the TxLips Band (initially spelled 2 Lips).

I quickly learned two things from this experience. The first thing I realized was that people who are not musicians or are not familiar with working with musicians do not know how to manage musicians. There were often times that her management missed things that we musicians needed in order to do the job we were hired for. This was part of what sparked my interest in management.

The second thing I realized was that there was a huge gap (bigger than I thought) in the industry for Black women rocking out on instruments. I recalled never seeing Black women musicians in magazines, on TV, on billboards, etc. I immediately remembered how hard it was for me in middle and high school when it came to listening to rock music. I started the collective to ensure that there was a platform for Black women and non-binary musicians to participate in what they want, when they want, and without having to sacrifice life's other demands. The TxLips Band's mission is to represent the girls out there who feel like a lot of other women out there. This is our time to do us unapologetically and shine for the world to see.





Photos by Dionne McDonald



Photos by Dionne McDonald

Also, as a lawyer, how does your background in the legal field cross into the music industry?

So, I always wanted to be on the educational side of the legal field because I saw from firsthand experience how artists were and still are being robbed of their rights, ownership, and creativity. I didn't want that to be my story, so I set out to learn the industry from all sides to figure out how to best protect myself for the long journey I knew was coming. All of what I do within the legal field has to do with educating musicians and artists to have a better understanding of the things they sign and the trajectory of their careers. I also consult and work

“Self-love. That is number one for me because that self-love and knowing who you are, despite the moving world around you, will be the thing that carries you through until the end.”

with entities to help them maneuver through situations that may arise.

What has been one of the most rewarding experiences you've encountered so far in your career?

I would say one of the most rewarding experiences thus far has been receiving my first cover of a print magazine last September on *Performer* magazine. This was a major goal/mile marker for me when I set out on this globetrotting journey years ago. It is important to me that more women of color are on the faces of these magazines to help inspire the next generations of rockstars reading.

What about the most challenging experiences, and how you overcame those obstacles?

One of the most challenging? I would say learning how to keep people at arm's length. There were so many speed bumps and ditches that I had to learn from, which definitely broke me down but helped me keep rebuilding myself to be stronger than ever.

As touring came to a halt during the pandemic, what did you do to stay creative in your music career, and how did you stay connected with fans?

I shifted gears to developing out the nonprofit leg of my company. The TxLips Academy has been something I was passionate about building from the beginning. We have been quite busy with planning for summer camps and partnering with Girls Rock Camps and other music schools around the world to bring workshops on the business side of music and protect music for kids. We also shifted to a lot of virtual shows, which has been a much-needed slowdown compared to the craziness

that comes with touring. We are working on an unplugged record store series now as we gear up to hopefully get back on the road in the near future!

We also had the amazing opportunity to work on a Netflix original movie featuring an all-Black cast. It's a Western, and we are so excited for it to come out in Fall 2021.

As you've covered in the Carrying the Torch for Black Girl Magic interviews, I'd like to ask you some of those same questions, as you are in a role that can help encourage, inspire, and empower up-and-coming young Black musicians. Is there a specific Black creative that inspired you to become a musician, and why?

yes! I would start with Beyoncé because of her constant drive to succeed and to be an amazing role model to young girls. I am also a huge fan of her versatility in music. It has given me ideas on how I can switch up my flow.

I am also deeply inspired by the strength and resilience of both Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Lady Bo. For them to push through the way they did in the industry during the time they did has always been a reminder to me that this male-dominated industry can take you out if you allow it to. Their stories remind me that Black women are the backbone for many things and people in this industry. We can, do, and always will shine.

Why do you think it is important to pay homage to the Black creatives that came before us? Why do you think the world needs to learn about Black history?

Because we are the blueprint! There is so much in this world that was birthed out of our culture, and it is important that the world is reminded of our history. Our history is American history.

What does it mean to be a Black woman to you?

It means being a pillar of strength first and foremost for myself. We often forget to take care of ourselves and put ourselves first. To be a Black woman is special, and I love every moment of the skin I'm in.



Photos by Dionne McDonald

H.E.R.

It's been a whirlwind past 12 months for H.E.R., beginning with her being the first Black female artist to have a Fender signature guitar — the H.E.R. Signature Stratocaster. With this major announcement, H.E.R. will inspire a new generation of guitar players.

The singer-songwriter debuted her solo album, *Back of My Mind*, in Summer 2021.

Other highlights for this talented young guitarist are winning two GRAMMys at the 2021 awards show: one for Song Of The Year for her single, "I Can't Breathe" and another for Best R&B song for "Better Than I Imagine" (with Robertas and Meshell Ndegeocello). She also walked away with an Oscar for Best Original Song for "Fight For You" from *Judas and the Black Messiah* at the 93rd Academy Awards Show, and named Best Female R&B/Pop Artist at the BET Awards.

The singer-songwriter debuted her solo album, *Back of My Mind*, in Summer 2021.

Kudos to H.E.R.!



GRAMMY® Award-winning R&B singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist H.E.R. discusses the driving forces behind her music with her signature Fender Stratocaster® in Guitar Center's new Make Music holiday video campaign, which launched Thursday, November 5, 2020.

On to gear, how do you define your guitar tone?

I define it as the sound that connects the listener to who you are and what you are trying to say through the guitar. I love warm, reverb-based tones with a touch of distortion to give the edge element of my rockstar vibes. I am endorsed by PRS Guitars, and my SE Custom provides the perfect tone foundation to build on.

What gear are you currently playing, and what do they bring to your style of music?

When it comes to guitars, I play a mixture of PRS, ESP, Gibson, and Ibanez. I switch up my guitars based on the sound I am going for. I endorse PRS and ESP, so my guitars of choice are: ESP LTD M-50FR, ESP LTD H-1000, PRS SE Custom 24, and PRS SE Akerfeldt. When it comes to acoustics, I play my PRS SE T55E and my Gibson J-45.

What is your "go-to" guitar for songwriting, and how do you approach the songwriting process?

Most of the time, I pick up my PRS SE Akerfeldt. That guitar holds a lot of meaning for me, and it reminds me of where I started. It is the guitar I use when I am working out song ideas. When it comes to songwriting, I tend to start with being inspired from something I experience or things

I see happening around me. I pull from those moments to create a foundation as I move into finding the words that describe how I feel. I write out my lyrics and then compose the music behind that based on what I am hearing in my head. I then spend time finding what chords and manner of playing will align with the lyrics and message I am working to convey to the listener. It is a journey, but the end goal is something that listeners can relate to. No matter who you are, where you come from, or where life has you. Humans are more alike than we are different, and music helps to connect us.

Based on what you have learned so far from the various interviews you've been a part of and the organizations you belong to, what qualities do you believe young women need to have as they enter into the music industry?

Self-love. That is number one for me because that self-love and knowing who you are, despite the moving world around you, will be the thing that carries you through until the end.

What's next?

I am working on my next studio album, and I will be releasing my music video for "The Dead Pool" later this year! 🎸

THE NARCOTIX: MOMMY ISSUES

A JOURNEY THROUGH INNER SPACE IN NON-LINEAR TIME, I.E. CHAOS.

BY Tara Low



The Brooklyn-based West African art-folk band the Narcotix was formed by longtime friends Esther Quansah (guitars, vocals) and Becky Foinchas (keys, vocals), both daughters of African immigrants. Adding in members on guitar, bass, keys, and drums, the five-piece band creates "a compelling musical statement whose relationship to identity is as fraught, complex, and everchanging as anything else in this time."

The Narcotix, who draw influences from many different genres, including African music, progressive math rock, and choral symphonies, released an EP *Mommy Issues* on June 11, 2021. The EP was recorded during quarantine at GB's Juke Joint in Long Island City following COVID guidelines. They tell us, the result is "a collection of spectral elegies for the living, a macabre homage to Brothers Grimm folklore through an Afromasochistic lens."

You released a new EP, *Mommy Issues*, on June 11. Share with us a little about the album—inspiration and songwriting process, and what fans can expect. We've been working with these songs for so long that it's hard to say what fans can expect. I don't know what they can expect because when I listen to the EP, I hear white noise at this point. So I guess they can expect organized white noise.

In terms of process, we are bushmeat, so naturally, the EP birthed itself...in the forest, in the mountains, over the sea, under the moon...we basically didn't follow any finite process. We tend to just allow the inspiration for each tune to come, then we just die in head first and see what happens, and by the end

of it, there are somewhere between 40 and 80 logic tracks, and nobody's blinking. That's how all our "songs" come to be. And it's why nobody knows what genre we are.

Is there a particular single that speaks to you?

Esther: "Esther" is a wild one. We're not releasing it as a single for general public safety reasons, but it's definitely one of the hardest hitters of all the pieces we've ever created. And I'm not just saying that because it's my namesake. I'm particularly sentimental about this track because, sonically and dynamically, it reflects the proverbial emotional rollercoaster. It touches softness, derailment, fragility, vulnerability, and bliss, before gradually descending into complete and unapologetic mania.

Becky: Clearly narcissists, I, for one, particularly enjoy "Rebecca" because you now don't have to die to know what that sounds like. I imagine this song playing in the ether the very moment you take your last dying breath. That moment when all your DMT and the DMT from all of the surrounding organisms course through your entire body in a spree of cascading sentiments. Blissful, worriless, and at ever-ascending peace, the concepts that were inculcated into our beings by society break apart like they'd been held together with silly string. "Rebecca" emulates that moment when Time becomes trifling, and Space becomes Time's intern. I feel it encapsulates that moment when your spirit replaces your ego with light and star gas. "Rebecca" is the sound of the bliss of dying.

The album was recorded during quarantine. What did that process look like?

A lucky series of happy accidents... The recording process was luxurious. We all got aggressively COVID tested, pulled the (British accent) "bahhnd" together again after not having touched for months, ran through a series of rehearsals, and then spent three days at the wonderland that is GB's Juke Joint in Long Island City, where we proceeded to explode our guts, sweat, and tears all over the place while feverishly flopping on the floor and rocking back and forth simultaneously. Hi, Colin!

Tell us more about the Narcotix—how the band was formed and a little about each member.

Esther: Well...we were born together, which sucks for Becky because she had to watch me grow taller than her. We must've been the same height at one point, I would presume.

Becky: We were never actually the same height.

She came out of her mother (mā, longer than I came out of my mother (her). (yes, we are one another's mothers.). Biologically speaking, it was an unfair race from the start, and I want my money back. The rest of the band are savants. I think the best way to describe everyone is by listening to their namesake songs on the EP. We sought to emulate each member's personality through each song. The song "John/Joseph" is dedicated to the drummer JonJo; the song "Adam" for the guitarist, Adam; "Esther" for Esther, "Rebecca" for Becky; and so on and so forth.

What message do you want to convey to listeners through your music?

unapologetic vulnerability. I think unconditional vulnerability is one of the most savage human traits under the sun. It's savage because you're unequivocally exposed, skinned, and in the nude, so in theory, it's not a fair fight. Bringing your feeble truth to the gunfight that is our world today is a super courageous move. But for those truly savage Truth seekers, it's so worth it if only to taste the truest pleasures of love. We think the payout is totally worth the exposure. So even if this EP sucks, it felt so good to be in the sun. Not a shadow in sight. It's a brave route to recognize that at the core, we are all the same—that is, when you strip back fear of judgment, fear of failure, fear of fear! spat all this hocus-pocus to simply encourage our future listeners to go "out of your way to grow into your way."

With Esther and Becky meeting in elementary school, how did each of you get involved with playing an instrument?

We both come from very musical families, so independently, the music was already running deep from the moment we were mere zygotes. Essie took up piano at age seven, and Becky joined the wrestling team in high school. So, by the time we formed the Narcotix (2012-ish), we had everything we needed.

Also, we've been in every chorus class together since the sixth grade—which is soooo weird. It's like looking at old photographs and realizing the same creepy dude was in the background in all your childhood photos.

Who were your early musical influences?

Esther: Paramore, Koffi Olomide, Meiway, Circa Survive, André-Marie Tala, This Town Needs Guns, J.M. Tim and Foty.

Becky: No Doubt, Nirvana, the Smiths, the entire Coupé Décalé movement, the village music my parents wouldn't stop playing any time we entered any car, Warpaint.

With the reopening of venues, do you have plans to perform live?

We're already picking out wigs!

TAKE FIVE WITH PHOENIX VAN DER WEYDEN

BY Guitar Gabby

Born in Brazil, raised in Rio de Janeiro, **Phoenix van der Weyden** is a force to be reckoned with. Endorsing companies like Kramer Guitars, Biondo Guitars, Swiss Picks, Lizard Spit, Soundslice FX, and more, she uses her passion for guitar to connect with others around her. She began playing guitar at a young age and, 14 years later, continues to positively influence those watching her journey.

Inspired by the oldies, van der Weyden shares how guitarists like Eddie Van Halen helped mold the guitarist she is today.

Tell us a little about your musical background. How old were you when you started playing guitar, and what inspired your passion for music?

I started playing guitar when I was 12 years old. My parents loved all kinds of music, from '80s metal to classical music, and it all influenced me to become a musician. My passion for the guitar came from watching Eddie Van Halen play. He was born to play and make people happy, and that inspires me every day.

What inspires you to wake up every day and continue pursuing your dreams?

The desire to write new music, teaching people how to play, and the support I get from my followers, which I am very grateful to have.

Take us through your songwriting process. What types of environments do you feel you need in order to be your most creative?

Sometimes an idea buzzes in my ear, and I'll run to record it, but at other times, it comes from inspiration that I get from watching other guitar players that I love and admire. I also pull inspiration from listening to old songs and soundtracks from some of my favorite films.

What guitars are you playing right now? Name your top two or three, if



Photo by Marcelo Vieira

possible.

Currently, I am playing on my Biondo Guitars "Phoenix" Signature Model guitar, which is a 1984 Holy Grail-style guitar based on the Kramer Baretta model played by Eddie Van Halen. It has a custom design of a Phoenix, a 1984 Floyd Rose Tremolo, and a single-coil humbucker, the "Sanctorum" by Planet Tone.

One of my other favorites to play is my Kramer 84 Reissue. It has a maple body and neck with the Duncan JB pickups installed on the bridge. It also has its original Floyd Rose, which I love.

Last but not least is my "Art Deco" semi-hollow by Biondo Guitars, which is a 335 style model based on imagery of the 1920s and 1930s. It has a mahogany body and neck and has a set of my signature pickups by Planet Tone.

Finish this sentence: I believe music...

Transcends any earthly thing. It's the closest thing we have from spirituality, a true gift. 🎸

Emerging singer, songwriter, and musician **Joy Oladokun** released her major-label debut album, *in defense of my own happiness*, on June 4, 2022, via Amigo Records/Verve Forecast/Republic Records.

With this album, Oladokun shares her unique perspective as a black, queer woman and the first generation child of Nigerian immigrants living in today's world. The new record builds on Oladokun's breakout start to 2021 and features 14 songs.

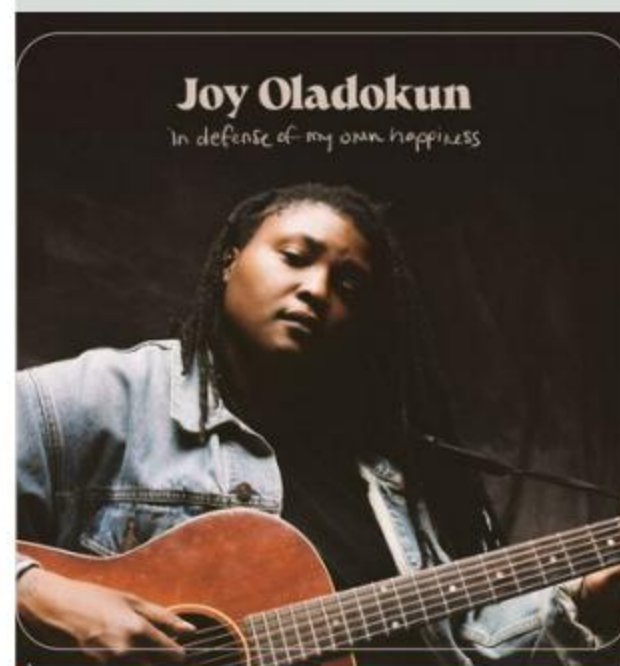


Photo by Nolan Knight

***in defense of my own happiness* Tracklist:**

1. Someone that I used to be
2. Sunday
3. Sorry isn't good enough
4. I see America
5. Wish you the best (feat. Jensen McRae)
6. Let it be me
7. Bigger Man (feat. Maren Morris)
8. If you got a problem
9. Mighty die young
10. Breathe again
11. Heaven from here (feat. Penny & Sparrow)
12. Look up
13. Taking the heat
14. Jordan



Photo by Ravin Vision



Photo provided by artist

THE TXLIPS BAND: CHALLENGING THE BOUNDARIES

BY Guitar Gabby

The TxLips Band is a diverse group of Black female and non-binary musicians whose mission is to challenge the boundaries set in the music industry as well as to inspire girls and women worldwide to be an unstoppable force in the music industry. This international touring collective was started by Gabriella "Guitar Gabby" Logan in 2016 after receiving a call from former Crime Mob member Diamond. Her need for a female guitarist opened up the opportunity for Logan to create the TxLips.

The mission? To shift the way this industry defines Black Girl Magic. Driven by the desire to see more BIPOC women taking control of their musical futures, this collective inspires people everywhere to be themselves, no matter what.

The TxLips Band is more than just a collective of boss musicians. TxLips Gang members **Megan Maloney**, **Tiye Cochran**, and **Bri Newsome** share what motivates them each day to inspire the next person.

Tiye Cochran is a Brooklyn native who has been playing guitar for 10 years and is just getting started.

Raised in Atlanta, Cochran uses her talent to inspire those around her to find their purpose in life.

Tiye, you kickstarted your journey with the TxLips Band last year, and it's been a great ride so far. Let's talk about music and what it means to you. Do you believe music helps to bridge gaps between people around the world?

Honestly, music means everything to me. It is the second most powerful force within my world, the Most High being the first. When I'm feeling low and disconnected from my purpose, I put on some Janet Jackson or SWV [Sisters with Voices], and I am immediately transported to a world of endless possibilities and excitement. As a '90s kid, I had the privilege of growing up in what I consider to be the best years for hip-hop and rock. I got to watch Biggie and Kurt Cobain in real-time. I'll never forget sitting in front of the TV as a first-grader watching MTV and seeing Lenny Kravitz rocking out, swinging his locks, singing "Are you Gonna Go My Way." My mom grew up in the '70s/'80s, so she shared her love of all the greatest disco, pop, rock, and R&B from those eras.

Being exposed to so much musical diversity gave me a taste for greatness, no matter what the genre.

I love to be a living canvas for all of the artistic expressions that bring people together in ways we can't explain in words. People who can't speak the same language are able to sing and enjoy the same songs. That's the power of music.

The music industry has been suffering during the pandemic. I know you have your own show called *All Rappity Raps*, which is a talk show dedicated to highlighting the amazing music birthed out of Black culture. Tell us about how you tie music and current world events together. How has this been a tool of unity during the pandemic?

I believe necessity is the mother of invention. COVID-19 came and hit us with the need to get more creative in how we reach audiences during quarantine. Prior to the pandemic, we were hosting our monthly show in person at an Atlanta venue. When quarantine started, we were forced to figure a way to stay visible with our fans and supporters, which eventually led to me hosting our show daily on Instagram Live. What initially seemed like a curse turned into a major blessing.

#TheCheckIn IG Live version of the show helped us to extend our reach and truly build with other creatives across the world. The change in format



Photo by Bobby Roebuck

Shifting gears to **Bri Newsome**, who is a bass-playing member of the TxLips Band and wants to remind people everywhere to: "Do what makes you happy! Don't listen to what anyone else has to say in judgment of your personality or who you are. Do you."

So, you just joined the TxLips Gang earlier this year. Tell our readers where you are from, how long you have been playing, and what bands inspire your style.

My name is Bri, and I'm from Baltimore, Maryland. I've been playing bass for about five years now, and most of my style is influenced by artists such as My Chemical Romance, Rico Nasty, Rage Against the Machine, and City Morgue. I tend to be drawn to upbeat, high-energy songs that are combined with aggression because I feel like it reflects my personality in a way. A lot of people say I'm a pretty upbeat person, but I think I'm more edgy than people may think! It's kind of like a dual personality type thing, but rather than trying to pick one side of who I am, I decided to show all of me rolled up into one.

One thing I love about you is your social media! It is always so engaging and fun to look at. There is an element of nostalgia that comes from the 2000s band songs that you cover. How would you describe your creative process when you start developing content?

My creative process is simple; I try to not think too much and go with the flow of what I am feeling or seeing in those creative moments. I never really have a concrete plan laid out, and I'm perfectly okay with that! A lot of people ask me how I make music or how to get better with playing, when in reality, I'm always asking myself that question as well. Oftentimes, I end up trying new things, and I allow the journey to take me where that takes me! If I don't like what I'm doing, I'll scrap it and come back to it later, but if I do like it, I'll put it out to the world and cross my fingers, ha-ha.

The TxLips Band represents Black Girl Magic every day through each of the TxLips Gang Members. Each person has their own style, voice, vibe, and taste pallet. Talk to us a little bit about why you joined the TxLips Band and what unique thing(s) you bring to the table?

I just wanna show everyone that Black people exist in every form imaginable. I didn't realize what I was doing could be so inspirational to young Black girls until I looked back and remembered how out of place I always felt when I was younger due to the lack of representation. I just want everyone like me to be themselves unapologetically. I also want them to remember that if they feel comfortable in their own skin and they're having a good time, nothing else matters! You know yourself better than anyone else.

Megan Maloney is a graduate of Berklee College of Music and has been playing the guitar for 14 years. "I fell in love with the guitar mostly because of the music I grew up with. My parents had very eclectic taste in music. I grew up listening to classical, Brazilian, Cape Verdean, jazz, R&B, salsa, rock, and other styles of music. My sister had a guitar she never played. I remember picking up the guitar and trying to learn along with all these different styles of music. It was then that I realized guitar was a versatile instrument.

Later on, after hearing guitarists like Zakk Wylde, Slash, Jimi Hendrix, Walter Giardino (Rata Blanca), Lita Ford, and Prince, I fell deeply in love with leadguitar. I could hear how they poured their soul into their playing, and I wanted so badly to do the same."

I have loved having you play in both the TxLips Band and your own band, the Phobes, which was exciting for me to see you form. We both have different sounds when it comes to music, so tell us a bit about the style that the Phobes play and what you all are working on now in the studio.

My band is called the Phobes, and we are made up of mostly female members. We are a blues-rock band based in Raleigh, North Carolina, and got started by accident, actually. One of my all-time favorite punk bands is the Ramones, so one day during the pandemic, I set out to start an all-Black female Ramones tribute band. People were really into the idea of that, and some even helped me find our current drummer. Shortly after, two of my singer friends saw the post and said they were in. We searched all over for a Black female bassist but never found one in our area, so I asked my uncle, a professional rock bassist, to sit in, and he's been in the band ever since. We are new but have a lot of energy and desire to continue building our fan base. We recently got the opportunity to play for the Piedmont Blues Preservation Society Blues Festival, which was an amazing experience that has led us to working on our first album in the studio.

I would imagine playing in various bands with different styles of rock requires different pieces of equipment, so let's talk gear! What is your go-to setup for live shows?

So when it comes to pedals, I love the authentic tone of analog pedals. My current go-to pedals are the MXR Super Badass Distortion and the VOX Wah. I like to keep my guitar tone thick and bassy. My favorite guitar is my Ibanez RG with a Floyd Rose. It has the perfect balance of bass and highs to cut through the distortion and give a really thick tone.

My go-to amp right now is the Fender Hot Rod Deluxe. It's the perfect amp to use when you are on the move and have to get from one gig to another quickly. This tube amp doesn't take up a lot of space but packs enough power to play any stage.

You are a pretty busy person! Between a full-time job and the bands you play in, what is your advice on maintaining a healthy life and still enjoying the music you love playing? Schedule, schedule, schedule! I'm in nine bands and work a full-time job. Life would not work if I didn't stick to a strict schedule. I always put rehearsals on my calendar, even when they occur on a regular basis. I schedule time to practice at home before a rehearsal, so I show up prepared. Each band is color-coded with dates, times, locations, and instruments to avoid mistakes. Most importantly, I schedule time off. Being a musician is hard. It's time-consuming but fun. If you don't take care of yourself, you can easily get burnt out. Make sure you schedule vacation time and stick to it.

also helped me to grow as an artist and greatly broaden my scope as an all-around entertainer and host. I use the platform to shed light on current topics affecting the artist community while engaging the guests and audience members in open-ended debates. Building this platform during quarantine has given me more to look forward to as an overall entertainer as I continue to build and nurture my career.

Let's talk about your versatility across genres. You play guitar in a rock band (TxLips) and you rap. How would you describe your style, and what are influences on your sound?

My style is a hybrid of all of the artists I love and hold dear to my heart. I am from Brooklyn originally, but I was raised in Atlanta. I love and respect the artists I grew up listening to: Lauryn Hill, Jay-Z, Biggie, Busta Rhymes, Missy Elliott, Ol' Dirty Bastard. These are the rappers I would say influence me the most. I love to emulate their style, flow, and delivery. What I love most about the aforementioned artists is that no one was afraid to be different. No matter what anyone had to say about them, each of them was unapologetically themselves. I strive to do just that, do and be me, no matter what.



Photo by Ashley Paul



Photo by Brandon Widner

TAKE FIVE WITH GHETTOSONGBIRD

BY Guitar Gabby

Funk Rock Goddess Samantha "GhettoSongBird" Hollins took the word "ghetto" and created a new meaning for it. Growing up in North Philadelphia, she found peace amidst the chaos. No matter what was going on around her, she knew that music would bring her back to her center and make it all make sense.

She fell in love with music at a young age and decided to dedicate her life to be part of the change-makers in this industry that are paving the way for the generations next in line. Pulling from her ancestors' footprint, she yields a natural aura that inspires others to pick up the guitar and rock out. GhettoSongBird talked to us about the dimensions of energy that lay the foundation for her powerful music and legacy in the making.

Tell us a little about your musical background. How old were you when you started playing guitar, and what inspired your passion for music?

My music career started with playing the keyboard by ear at the age of 12. My songwriting style grew from blending genres and melodies that were inspired by my mom's extensive funk/rock record collection. When it comes to guitar, I always say it chose me. Over the years, I struggled to find a guitarist that could accompany my sets on a consistent basis. So at the age of 25, I decided to pick up the guitar and learn it for myself. I had no idea I would fall in love with my 6-string Liberator and eventually become an extension of it.

What inspires you to wake up every day and continue pursuing your dreams?

Ancestral energy drives me to the third power. There are so many untold stories and harmonic vibrations that live inside of me and are pushing to escape or express themselves. Even when isms attempt to stifle my passion, I get lifted by purpose, and I continue to feed my passion.

Also, being a mom gives me that extra dose of stamina to be the example that will motivate my children to follow their dreams.

Take us through your songwriting process. What types of environments do you feel you need in order to be your most creative?

Songs come through me in different places, spaces, times, and dimensions. They are never written. I keep them all in my memory and will write them out someday. The thing is, I never consciously decided to not write down the lyrics to my songs. I would pick up my guitar and would strum chords, and the words would form out of that. When I pull out songs I haven't sung in a while for shows, the words begin to flow right back to my memory.

I started out on the acoustic, so having an acoustic guitar is always a great way to allow songs to be born at any given time. Also, I love playing acoustic gigs. It's a totally different experience with just words and music flowing. I do grab my electric guitar when I feel I have something heavier to say with my music and words. My live band allows me to go outward more so.

What guitars are you playing right now? Name your top two or three, if possible.

My main electric guitar right now is the Vintage VS6VGB Reissued Series Vibrola Gun Hill Blue guitar. I say "right now" because I switch guitars like I switched my style over the past 20 years. I like having that level of freedom of expression. Then there is my Ibanez GA35 Thinline Acoustic-Electric Classical Guitar that I've been creating on for over the last five years. This guitar is my baby! I chose classic because, although that's not my genre, I love to mix tones and textures to keep the sound fresh.

Finish this sentence: I believe music...

Is a super-shero! 🦸—

ALIAH GUERRA

THE APP BY A MUSICIAN FOR MUSICIANS

BY Guitar Gabby

Aliah Guerra is on a mission to change the music industry one app at a time. This Canadian-based singer-songwriter, guitarist, and app developer has developed a way to connect musicians, producers, and industry professionals alike. The "Aliah Guerra" App was birthed out of the struggles that most independent artists face: maintaining artistic control in every avenue while pushing your music to the masses.

This well-rounded Trinidadian musician has always been versed in many areas of the music industry. She is an advocate of business education and uses her avenues to connect people of various backgrounds to the common love of music. With seven albums and singles on her musical resume and an app to provide resources to musicians around the world, Guerra has no intentions of stopping now. She is a member of the international Black female rock collective the TxLips Band and seeks to inspire girls and women of color everywhere to shine as bright as they possibly can as they follow their dreams.

Let's start with the beginning of your legacy. Were you born and raised in Montreal, and did you always know you wanted to be a musician and app developer growing up?

So, I was born and raised in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, into an academic yet musical Trinidadian family. I had been speaking clearly from a young age and always wanted to be in show business. Originally, I wanted to act and model, but I had a lot of challenges living in Montreal due to me being a kid who was away from all the major English TV show auditions in Toronto and LA. Initially, I was discouraged, but as I got older, the downtime turned my attention to my studies, and then music became my escape—a "productive distraction," as I like to call it.

So, you found your productive distraction in music. When did you finally pick up the guitar, and what really got you into playing?

Well, I started playing the guitar when I was about 12 years old. I started playing on my grandfather's old classical guitar that my mom and her siblings were never allowed to touch growing up. My grandfather was a music teacher, and he used to jam with his band on the weekends after all of his lessons. After he passed away, I was old enough to inherit his instruments, and I began teaching myself simple songs like "A Horse With No Name" by the band America and "Leaving On A Jet Plane" by John Denver. Soon after, I fell in love with Amy Winehouse and jazz music. In awe of her talent, I taught myself how to play and sing several of her songs by ear. After studying her acoustic live performances with guitarist Femi Temowo, I realized I loved playing guitar, singing, and jazz. I started posting videos on YouTube, and my following started to grow around the world. I would later learn of Tori Kelly, who released her first EP, *Handmade Songs*, in 2012. It was then that I went from playing acoustic covers to writing my own songs and producing my



Photo by Jayce Bryant

first EP within the walls of my home. I was empowered by the artists that I had been listening to and wanted to take my artistry to the next level. Ultimately, it turned out that playing guitar was the golden ticket to achieving my dreams of getting into the music business, touring, movies, and more.

You recently released an app that is an excellent tool for musicians, no matter where they are in the world. Tell us a little bit about it and what gave you the idea to create this for the music industry.

After creating my first EP, I decided to take the independent artist route to approach getting my music out there. Most of this decision was based on wanting to maintain creative control while I was studying in school. I had to learn a lot on my own, and I kept finding myself saying, "If only I knew this before." As much as art is a business, business is also an art. I believe that when artists have direct access to the resources needed, it makes it more possible to take care of your business. It was emotionally draining and overwhelming at times. There is no blueprint for this, and there is a lot of "do it yourself" inside of the industry, so I wanted to create a platform that would grant immediate access to creative networks, contacts, tips, and hacks that I've learned over the years in the hopes of helping others out there.

How did you learn about building apps and programming?

One thing about me is that if I don't know how to do something, my determination will push me to figure it out. I canceled all of my European shows at the beginning of the pandemic, and it kind of discouraged me because I felt like I was not able to engage with my fans the way I aimed

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When you consistently dedicate time to self-discovery and improving your life, mind, and health, achieving your goals and dreams becomes a bit easier.

to. Additionally, social media algorithms constantly changing have made it very difficult for independent artists and small businesses to reach their audience. Most of my learning process was trial and error. I found a lot of ideas on YouTube that helped me to craft how I wanted my app to look, so I would get up on Sunday mornings at 8 a.m. to attend various workshops and live events to learn more. Because technology is advancing and always changing, I often spent 16 hours a day learning, developing, changing, etc. It took a lot of time, but it all worked out in the end.

Let's talk about the tech side of the music industry. What, if anything, do you think this side of the industry is missing when it comes to apps and development?

There isn't enough emphasis on the fact that artists can also be creative entrepreneurs. As artists, we tend to find creative avenues in order to have multiple streams of income. We are constantly looking for ways to fund our art, and I believe being a "starving artist" should be the last resort if at all possible. The technology is out there, but often it seems so out of reach to artists who aren't signed to major record labels with those resources.

When creatives take ownership of their brand and business (especially in the tech industry), it allows them the freedom to find ways to create immediate digital access for fans to directly support what is going on no matter where they are in the world.

How do you balance music and developing apps?

Well, music is my life, and everything else is an extension of that. Much of my day-to-day activities revolve around doing something to support my goals. While my business demands a lot from me, I am thankful that music also requires me to stay healthy in my mind, body, and spirit. I find these avenues help increase my creative productivity,

so I make sure I stay on top of my organization, planning, emails, booking, marketing, etc.

What are a few qualities that you believe all artists must have as they enter into the industry?

I believe having and sticking to your standards are important. Don't be afraid to be ambitious, resourceful, confident, patient, hard-working, coachable, and willing to always get up and try again. Professionalism is key, but don't forget to have fun!

All of these things are necessary but balance is the key.

What is your go-to home studio setup?

I am currently using my Mixcraft 9 Behringer u MC204HD 2x4 uSB 2.0 Audio/MIDI Interface, a Neewer-700 condenser mic, my Jay Turser JT-D200 electric guitar, and my Alesis MPC MIDI keyboard. I've been using this setup for roughly 10 years and have made light upgrades over the years. I made my first EP with this equipment, so this goes to show that you can make it happen with a few good tools!

What is one piece of advice you would give to others seeking to follow in your footsteps?

I would say the best investment to make is in yourself. you have so much value inside of you just waiting to be tapped into. When you consistently dedicate time to self-discovery and improving your life, mind, and health, achieving your goals and dreams becomes a bit easier. This journey will be lonely, and it may seem overwhelming at first, but it is all worth it in the end. you might even surprise yourself and realize that you are capable of more than you think. Try not to get distracted by trends on social media. Remember to always be you and invest in yourself! The rest will follow. —



Photo in public domain



Crowned the Godmother of Rock and Roll, Sister Rosetta Tharpe rattled conventions throughout the 1930s and '40s when she unabashedly exposed women to be soulful, gritty singers and passionate, well practiced guitarists. At the tender age of six, Tharpe began performing throughout the south with her mother's gospel & evangelist troupe.

After relocating to Chicago, it became apparent that Tharpe's southern roots style began to absorb the chi-town blues sound, producing a unique and captivating quality to Tharpe's music. Beyond being a female African American guitarist throughout a time of heavy racial prejudice, controversy arose in Tharpe's career as she strove to perform for both religious and secular audiences, as well as when the news of her same-sex romantic relationships became public.

Persevering beyond the many hurdles, Tharpe's most celebrated songs are "Rock Me" and "Strange Things Happening Every Day," which became the first gospel single to cross over onto the Billboard charts. A resurgence for blues in the United Kingdom emerged in the 1960s, allotting Tharpe an opportunity at a long and prosperous career. Her influence over musicians such as Chuck Berry, Elvis Presley, Bob Dylan, and Eric Clapton proves Tharpe's strong and lasting impression on music, which led to her induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2018.

TAKE FIVE WITH CÉCILE DOO-KINGUÉ

BY Guitar Gabby

Born and raised in New York City, Cécile Doo-Kingué is a guitarist, singer-songwriter, and recording engineer, who won the Fondation SPACQ Edith Butler Award for Excellence for her song "Home." Written from personal experience, Doo-Kingué took her journey of being a first-generation Cameroonian living in Montreal and forged her own path in the music industry. With four studio albums under her belt, this international touring artist is inspired by the world around her and uses life's experiences to connect people and music.

Tell us a little bit about your musical background. How old were you when you started playing guitar, and what inspired your passion for music?

I was roughly 12 when I started playing guitar, but my passion for music was developed long before I was born. I come from a multicultural background. I am the last of eight kids, and my family loved music, so I was always exposed to so many different styles and artists. As I started playing, this opened me up to shredding to a wide variety of music from jazz, makossa, soul, rock, and everything else in between.

For as long as I can remember, I've been surrounded by music that yielded a well-rounded musician. Recorder, piano, guitar, percussion, and drums; there's no extracting music from my existence. It lives in me.

What inspires you to wake up every day and continue pursuing your dreams?

I'm alive and blessed with a talent that brings joy. Fostering and maintaining a beginner's mind helps keep things fresh for me. Learning something new and combining curiosity with love,

passion, compassion, and determination make every day worth living. you gotta keep growing!

I'm blessed to be surrounded by people who inspire and empower me every day. I try to do the same for them, so we mutually uplift each other. The company you keep makes all the difference in the world.

Take us through your songwriting process. What types of environments do you feel you need in order to be your most creative?

I don't really have a process, per se. Some lyrics, melodies, or chord progressions haunt me for a long time before becoming a tune, while some songs come out in two minutes. Most of the time, ideas come in a block where lyrics, melody, and composition all dance in my head. At first, my writing used to start off with chords or a riff, but as I get older, I've been starting with lyrics or melodies and progressing from there.

When it comes to the environment, I prefer peaceful spaces to work out ideas, but when inspiration hits, I'll take it—however, whenever, and wherever it comes.

What guitars are you playing right now? Name your top two or three.

I am currently playing my Gibson ES-335, my Telecaster, and my Gibson L-00.

Finish this sentence: I believe music...

Music is life. Music heals. Music unites. Music saves. And, music does not discriminate. —



Photo by Terry Hughes Images

SUNNY WAR

THE POWER OF MUSIC

BY Guitar Gabby

Sunny War is far more than just a blues guitarist. Since receiving her first guitar at age seven, War has cultivated her sound into what she describes as a tribute to early-1900s country blues. Alongside this, she recently started the downtown LA chapter of the nonprofit organization Food Not Bombs, where she serves vegan meals in Skid Row. She's also in a punk band with her high school friend Brian Rodriguez, called Anus Kings, whose hit album will be reissued in July

In her interview, War gets into the creative process behind her last album, *Simple Syrup*; her musical influences growing up; and how COVID-19 has affected her work with Food Not Bombs.

Let's start by sharing a bit about your music background. How old were you when you developed your interest in music and guitar?

I've wanted to play guitar for as long as I can remember, and I'm sure that it's because my stepfather was a musician. A lot of my parents' friends were guitar players, and according to my

mom, I asked for a guitar when I was three years old. She finally got me my first classical guitar when I was seven years old, and I remember it being too big for me at first. I actually spent the first two years playing it flat on my lap like it was a pedal steel guitar

How would you describe your sound?

I'd describe my sound as a tribute to the country blues of the early 1900s with contemporary lyrics or simply folk music.

Who would you say has been your biggest influence when it comes to guitar and your songwriting style?

I would have to say my biggest influence on guitar is Elizabeth "Libba" Cotten. I first discovered her when I was 13 years old. I really started getting into old blues; that's when I learned that she was around my age when she wrote the song "Freight Train." I was very inspired. Just a couple of years after learning to play "Freight Train," I actually started hopping freight trains! So the song has become even more meaningful to me over the years, especially her unique style of playing guitar.

Walk us through the process of how you wrote your last album, *Simple Syrup*. What were some of your highest moments, and what were your most challenging moments?

While writing *Simple Syrup*, I focused on lyrics more than music for the first time. In previous albums, the guitar parts were most important to me, but with this record, all the songs started with lyrics. I would write little poems on my phone constantly, and I was trying different writing exercises that my mom suggested. The main exercise was forcing myself to write a couple of poems a day or to write anything for at least an hour a day. The biggest challenge was trying to write music for the poems. One of the other big challenges was learning how to appreciate simplistic chord arrangements and what was best musically for the lyrics.

Would you say your passion for activism and social justice comes through your music?

I love protest music and do have some songs that are political, but I never go out of my way to write about social issues. I try to stay honest when I sit down



Photo by Florencia P. Marano

to write, and a lot of times, I just want to escape reality. As a Black woman, sometimes it feels overwhelming to write poetry every time someone Black is murdered by the police. Although I'd like to be "that" artist, there are plenty of secret songs that I've written out of anger, but no one will ever hear them because I've decided they lacked anything comforting for traumatized listeners. I will probably challenge more social issues through music in the future, but the more serious the topic, the more time I tend to put into my piece.

Tell us a little bit about your nonprofit Food Not Bombs' response to COVID-19's impact on the homeless community in LA.

I started the Downtown Los Angeles Food Not Bombs chapter before COVID in January of 2020. We started out serving vegan meals every other Wednesday in Skid Row. When COVID arrived, we took a few months off but resumed on June 10, thanks to the courage of my buddy Saku Devi. She came up with the idea of serving sack lunches instead of our usual potluck-style lunch. With all of us (Food Not Bombs volunteers) being unemployed due to COVID and not having much to do, we decided to do it every Wednesday instead of every other Wednesday. Although work has resumed for many of us, our volunteer group has grown, and we are still serving lunch in Skid Row every Wednesday! We've had lots of benefit shows and fundraising to keep this thing going. Lots of folks in Los Angeles have donated their time and resources to our Food Not Bombs endeavor.

What is one thing you want your fans to leave with when they listen to your music?

When fans listen to my music, I want them to feel calm and a sense of relaxation.

We hear you will have a surprise reissue of an album with your punk band, Anus Kings, for your fans. Tell us a bit about Anus Kings (love the name, by the way, lol) and what fans can expect to be different on this reissue.

Anus Kings is a punk band with my friend Brian Rodriguez on bass and myself on the acoustic



Photo by Florencia P. Marano

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We had an acoustic guitar, electric bass, and a practice amp. I think there's something sweet about how we worked with what we had, and the teenage angst isn't lost in the quietness.

guitar. We met in our freshman year of high school and immediately bonded over our love of '80s hard rock and a desire to have a punk band of our own. We were both poor teenagers who never had access to practice spaces or the gear that we needed to have a real punk band, but we still made albums and still played shows. We were known as a Folk Punk band even though we never intended to stay acoustic forever. The reissue of our album *Seems You Haven't Learned* will be out on July 21 via Hen House Studios. Harlan Steinberger remastered the album, and July 21 this year marks the album's 10-year anniversary. We were young Black and brown punk rock kids who dreamed of having huge amps and a thrashy drummer. We had an acoustic guitar, electric bass, and a practice amp. I think there's something sweet about how we worked with what we had, and the teenage angst isn't lost in the quietness. —

Inspired by the successful female blues musicians of the 1930s and 40s, Beverly "Guitar" Watkins taught herself to play the guitar by listening to her mother's records. Watkins spent the early 1960s performing rhythm guitar with Piano Red & the Interns. She can be heard playing on their singles, "Doctor Feelgood" and "Right String But The Wrongyo-yo." Watkins then joined Eddie Tigner and the Ink Spots, which later led to her residency with Leroy Redding & the Houserockers.

It wasn't until the rise of the internet in the 1990s that Watkins was rediscovered and began gaining the recognition that she had long deserved. In 1998, she was part of the Women of the Blues "Hot Mamas" tour with Koko Taylor and Rory Block, and her 1999 solo debut *Back in Business*, earned her a W.C. Handy Award nomination.

Sadly, Ms. Watkins passed away in Atlanta, Georgia, in 2019.



Photo by Tara Low

TAKE FIVE WITH MELANIE JAG

BY Guitar Gabby

Driven by the limitless possibilities of music, **Melanie Jag** is an excellent example of representation for women guitarists in jazz. She has been playing guitar for eight years and has no intentions of stopping her grind as she continues to pursue her goals of writing and producing for industry artists. Listening to Jag regurgitate Sister Rosetta Tharpe's guitar solo for "Didn't It Rain?" it's obvious that she plays from the heart as she creates a whirlwind of nostalgic riffs while leaving room for slightly distorted undertones and reverb.

This Toronto native is a graduate of the York University Jazz program and uses guitar improv to voice her passion of highlighting women guitarists within the music industry. Using social media as the stomping ground to connect musicians, Jag believes that representation matters and that it is important for women to see themselves as they discover their calling in life.

Tell us a little about your musical background. How old were you when you started playing guitar, and what inspired your passion for music? I was 12 years old when my parents agreed to buy me a guitar and signed me up for lessons. I was in love with the music I used to hear on the Disney Channel (specifically the Jonas Brothers), but I was also listening to Bruce Springsteen, Fleetwood Mac, and lots of country albums from my parents' music

collection. I loved how the guitarists looked free and like they were having so much fun when they were playing. As a kid, I watched them and wanted to be just like them one day. Throughout the years, I ended up picking up other instruments, like the bass guitar and the bass clarinet, but it wasn't until I was 16 that I started to take playing the guitar seriously. I enrolled at York University when I was 19, where I studied music and specialized in jazz guitar. I currently play in an electro-acoustic orchestra, where I'm learning to play my guitar in unconventional ways while extracting unique sounds from it, similar to "prepared guitar" techniques.

What truly inspired my passion for music were the live concerts I attended as a kid and in my teens. Being able to see my favorite artists and scream their lyrics at the top of my lungs is one of the best feelings in the world to me. I'm also inspired every time I discover an artist whose music is able to deeply resonate with me or a song that's unlike others I've heard before.

What inspires you to wake up every day and continue pursuing your dreams?

The endless possibilities that music entails. When I think I've mastered one skill, there's always a million different ways to approach it, or there's always someone who can offer a new perspective. When I first started studying music, theory was always intimidating to me since there were so many concepts to wrap my head around. Once I realized that there's always room to learn more and that even the "simplest" concept can be used in the most complex pieces of music, it became something that I'm now super excited about and not something I fear. Also, there's a unique connection that happens whenever I perform with other musicians, collaborate on a song, or even just discuss music with another musician. I've met so many incredible musicians all

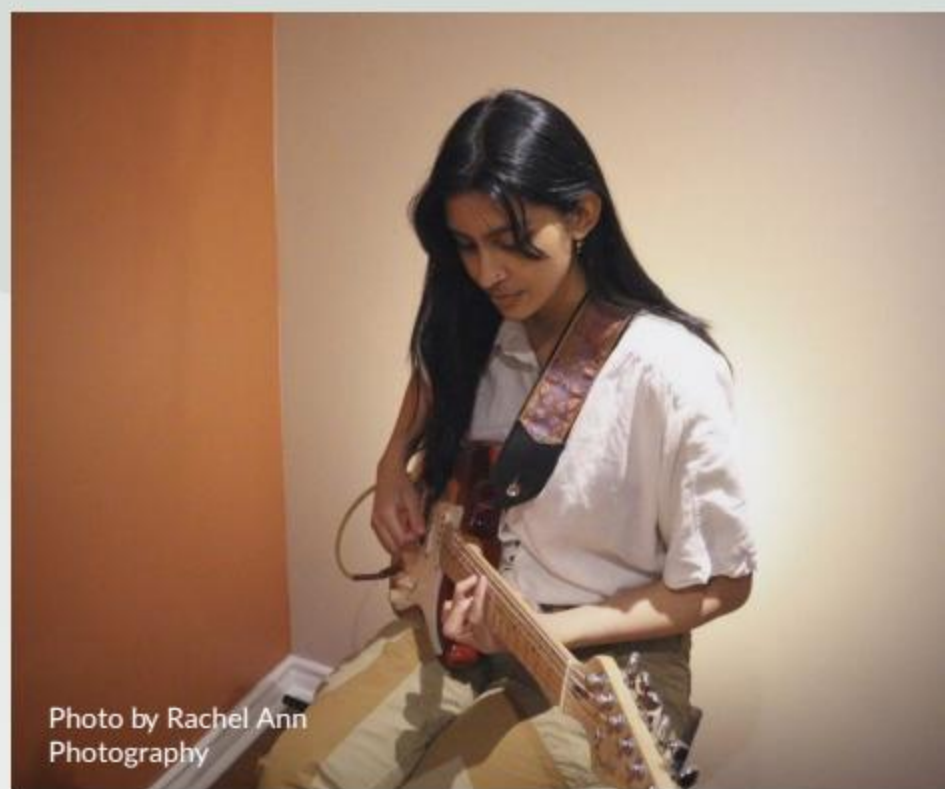


Photo by Rachel Ann Photography

over the world through social media that always keep me motivated and inspired.

Take us through your songwriting process. What types of environments do you feel you need in order to be your most creative?

My songwriting process is quite a messy one. The one thing that ties my songwriting process together is definitely my voice memos app. Anytime I have an idea, I always pull out my voice memos and hum the melody or chord progression that I hear in my head and later figure it out on my guitar. The initial idea can strike at the most random times—in the shower, driving, or even in the middle of an exam. From there, all I need is my laptop and a quiet space to develop the idea!

What guitars are you playing right now? Name your top two or three, if possible.

I currently play a Fender Strat American Pro HSS, a Gibson SG Standard, and occasionally, a Little Martin acoustic.

Finish this sentence: I believe music...

Can be found within every avenue of life. Whether it be the sound of someone walking down a staircase, the sound of someone typing on a keyboard, or a conversation with someone you just met, anything can be a source of inspiration and be turned into something musical. 🎸



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DIVINITY ROXX:

A SHE THAT ROCKS

BY Guitar Gabby



Photo by Jay Denes

This GRAMMY-nominated legend has set the tone for many female bassists in the game. Playing for artists like Victor Wooten, Beyoncé, Erykah Badu, Jay-Z, Nona Hendryx, and more—**Divinity Roxx** is a she that rocks. She began developing her relationship with music around the age of five and knew that she was destined for greatness. Her matriculation through Victor Wooten's bass camp escalated her career to the next level, eventually leading her to touring with Wooten less than a year after her completion. For many, it was her featured solo performances during "The Beyoncé Experience" and "I... Am" tours that inspired many young girls and women around the world to find what they are passionate about and rock it.

Roxx is meticulous in the creation of her sound. She's endorsed with a variety of guitar

companies, including Warwick, DR Strings, and MONO Creators. Simply put, Roxx is Black Girl Queer Magic. She continuously imparts her knowledge to the next generation of rockstars. Roxx shared what pushes her each and every day in a ruthless industry. Her mission? To inspire and uplift those around her to live their lives to the fullest.

Let's start by telling us a bit about your music background. How old were you when you developed your interest in music and bass guitar?
I fell in love with

music from a very early age. Between my mom playing music in the house all the time and my first music class in elementary school, I recognized the power in the combination of music and words around the time I was five. I sang in the chorus in elementary school and also played the handbells and clarinet in elementary and middle school. I was a member of the distinguished Atlanta Area II Honor Chorus, which included kids from all over the Atlanta Area II School District. I didn't start playing the bass until my second year in college, though my uncle was a saxophonist and bassist who would encourage me to play along with him in his makeshift studio when I was a kid.

I really fell in love with the bass while I was in college. I went to UC Berkeley to become a journalist, and while I was there, I studied with June Jordan and her Poetry for the People course. I had founded a hip-hop group in high school, and after leaving UC Berkeley to move back home to Atlanta, we formed our own label and released our first album, *Fool Proof*, produced by DJ Kemit. I began moonlighting as a bass player and gigged frequently in local clubs like yin yang Cafe and uptown Comedy Corner, where the house band would accompany poets before the comedy show began. I was in the house band with the great Tarus Mateen and his brothers then. Atlanta had a diverse music scene, and I was heavily influenced by bands like Johnny Prophet, Whild Peach, Edith's Wish, Outkast, Goodie Mob, Joi, 100 Monkeys, Three5Human, and so many more.

There was also a prominent hip-hop scene, and I was part of this wild underground crew of rappers and dancers called "The Weirdos." Thinking back about those times gives me chills because it was an exciting time in Atlanta, and we were out in the streets all the time working on music, going to rehearsals, dancing, being young and having fun, ciphering downtown, and just collaborating with each other. There was a Renaissance happening, and we were a part of it. Our producers, Hundred Monkeys, lived at 227 Mitchell Street and would throw parties and raves. We would hang out there every



Photo by AMB Photography



guitargirlmag.com

day after school and record, rehearse, and just kick it. 227 Mitchell Street was a legendary spot.

How would you describe your sound?

My sound is a blend of hip-hop, rock, soul, and R&B. I think the new name they've given it is "Progressive R&B." There's even a GRAMMY category for it now, which is exciting. I always called it "Alternative Soul," or back in the day, I called it "Rocked Out Hip-Hop." Those terms didn't stick. They didn't do my sound justice anyway, so I'm down with the "Progressive R&B" movement, but that description doesn't address the rock element. We'll get there someday. "Rock Soul" is what Fantasia calls her music, and I think that's a great description for people who like a little Rock in their soul. I know I do.

Who would you say has been your biggest influence when it comes to bass and your songwriting style?

When it comes to the bass, I have so many influences: Victor Wooten, Marcus Miller, Prince, Larry Graham, Bootsy Collins, Taurus Mateen, Tres Gilbert, Preston Crump, Meshell Ndegeocello, Flea, Janice-Marie Johnson, Shay Barnes, and all the cats I learned from while coming up in the underground scene in Atlanta, like Woodchuck, Khari Simmons, Avery Johnson, just to name a few.

As far as the influences on my songwriting style, again so many influences and inspirations from back in the day up to now: Prince, N.E.R.D., Rage Against the Machine, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Lenny Kravitz, Outkast, Dungeon Family, Joi, A Tribe Called Quest, Fugees, Lauryn Hill, Bootsy Collins, the Internet, Anderson .Paak, Thundercat, George Clinton, Dallas Austin, and so many more!

Let's talk about representation in the music industry. How important are diversity and inclusion (in all aspects) to you? Do you think the music industry is generally doing a good job of showing more BIPOC musicians—particularly, female and queer musicians of color?

As a creative person, my life is full of diversity and inclusion and always has been. It's mind-blowing and numbing to think that people have to actually form committees and specialized job titles like Diversity and Inclusion Managers, Editors, etc., to hold themselves accountable for what I think is a way of life. It's time for people to look into their own lives and see how a lack of diversity within their organizations reflects the lack of diversity in their own personal lives. We can all do better. I believe BIPOC people are making their own voices heard, taking control of their own narratives, and not waiting for the industry to catch up and include them. That's thanks to the power of the internet and social media.

The industry is still catching up, but after this pandemic and the murder of George Floyd and countless other Americans by the police and "concerned citizens," people are waking up to how their complicity continues to perpetuate these tragedies. I love seeing queer women and non-gender conforming artists of color raise their voices and their profile, championing other queer and non-



Photo by Jay Denes

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I'm currently working on a family music album with the first single, "Ready Set Go!" available everywhere as of May 13 (that's Stevie Wonder's Birthday).

gender conforming people of color. I remember how difficult it was for me, a Black, queer woman, in high school, but today young people have inspirational queer role models they can look up to, and they have opportunities to feel seen and validated. That's

huge. What a difference time makes, but we have a way to go. There will always be some resistance to evolution, but "resistance is futile." In the famous words of protestors from all over the world, *We're here. We're queer. Get used to it.*

What has been one or two of the biggest highlights of your career thus far?

I've had so many highlights. Touring with the great Victor Wooten has certainly been a highlight of my career. Touring with Beyoncé, having an opportunity to take a celebrated solo during two of her world tours, and writing original music for her "I... Am World Tour" was a huge highlight for me. Touring with my own band nationally and internationally has been a highlight. There's nothing like being able to perform the music you've written for others and to have others connect to that music so deeply that they don't see normally perceived differences between you and them. And that's a testament to the power of music combined with the spoken word.

What is your current go-to bass to play?

Honestly, it's whichever bass is near enough for me to grab at the time. While my number one bass has been a custom 4-string Warwick Streamer LX made in Germany a number of years ago, lately, my custom 4-string Fender ultra Jazz Bass has been getting all the love. That bass

sounds really good, and I can dial in just about any sound I want. The only drawback about that bass is that it's not double scale, so I still need my Warwick when I wanna get all fancy and play some chords and things above the 19th fret.

What is one thing you want your fans to leave with when they listen to your music?

I want my fans to be inspired, uplifted, and vibrating higher after listening to my music.

Tell us a little bit about any of your upcoming projects.

I'm currently working on a family music album with the first single, "Ready Set Go!" available everywhere as of May 13 (that's Stevie Wonder's Birthday). I've started a new production company, Divi Roxx Kids, that aims to enrich the lives of kids and young adults with music and content that is inspiring, uplifting, educational, and entertaining. One of the areas in the music business where we need to see more people of color represented is in the family music space. Half of the kids in the U.S. are kids of color, but when you look out at who is providing the soundtrack for those young lives, you aren't seeing and hearing BIPOC people. There is an organization I've been working closely with called Family Music Forward that is working on changing that. In addition, there are some other projects I'm working on. I recently collaborated with Pierce Freelon in his project *Black to the Future*, and I have some other really exciting projects dropping in the fall that I can't go into much detail about at the moment, but I'm so excited about everything I'm doing. I really feel like a kid on Christmas Eve. Be sure to check out www.diviroxxkids.com to stay up to date. 🎸

TAKE FIVE WITH MORGEHENNA

BY Guitar Gabby

Self-taught metal guitarist **Morgehenna** started playing guitar at the age of 17. Inspired by bands like Creedence Clearwater Revival, Ozzy Osbourne, and Motörhead, she found her sound in death metal and began building her following. She started covering songs like "Caught Devouring" by Deeds of Flesh, "The Ibex Moon" by Incantation, and more, which led to her garnering more than 44k social media followers.

Continuing to build on her career, Morgehenna eventually became the lead guitarist and

vocalist for the Florida death metal band Kryptkeeper. "I started playing music as an act of desperation. I was in a dark place mentally, and I needed something intangible to pull me out of it."

Tell us a little about your musical background. How old were you when you started playing guitar, and what inspired your passion for music?

I grew up in a very religious household. My parents were both a part of this Christian-based cult, which had very strict rules. I remember catching my dad having to sneak around to listen to rock and metal and my mom always yelling at him when she caught him. It was crazy, and I think the fact that it was so taboo in my household made it more intriguing for me. I started listening to bands like Pink Floyd, Jimi Hendrix, Black Sabbath, and a lot of classic rock. I ended up picking up the guitar at about 17 after playing keys for two years and bass guitar for one. I taught myself how to play out of the deprogramming of my brain from all of the dogmatic principles that the cult instilled in me. My teenage years were very difficult for me. I was suffering from clinical depression and coping with some really dark things. Picking up a guitar was the best thing that ever happened to me. Learning a new song on guitar would give me this excitement and fulfillment that I had never felt before. Still today, my passion for music is greatly inspired by my desperation for creative expression and a sense of fulfillment.

What inspires you to wake up every day and continue pursuing your dreams?

When young girls tell me that they started playing guitar because of me—and I've heard it from men too, which also brings me great joy—but hearing from another girl that I inspired them to pick up a guitar, makes me overwhelmingly happy.

I've noticed society often encourages women to pick up a skill that is financially lucrative or superficial in ways that will grant them temporary satisfaction. Rarely does society encourage women to learn something that will



Photo by Chris Aarock

bring them personal fulfillment, grant them mental stability, or make them feel powerful. Guitar did all of those things for me. I think having an outlet for creative expression is something that can save a lot of young girls from feeling like just another mental health statistic.

Take us through your songwriting process. What types of environments do you feel you need in order to be your most creative?

I feel most creative when alone in my bedroom. A lot of the time, a girl's bedroom is her safe haven. It's where I always come back to when I need to channel the emotions needed to play death metal. Whether it's anger, frustration, or just the need to be theatrical, the solitude that my bedroom provides is always welcoming of creativity.

What guitars are you playing right now? Name your top two or three, if possible.

Right now, my favorite guitar is my Jackson X Series Rhoads. It's the guitar I play in my band Kryptkeeper. I love the tone and the attack of the Seymour Duncan pickups.

My other favorite is a Blakhart 7 string. The guitar is an absolute monster. The tone is crushing and clean at the same time. It has great clarity. I haven't been able to use it live yet.

I also play a Killer KG-EXPLoder guitar, which was made popular by the guitarist of LOU DNESS. The tone is great for sweeps and warm leads.

Finish this sentence: I believe music...

I believe music has a unique power that many people fail to recognize. It has the ability to bring people together who may have absolutely nothing in common otherwise.



Photo by Chris Aarock

SHEVONNE PHILIDOR:

MUSIC IS THE PLATFORM TO LOVE, INSPIRE, AND BE FREE

BY Guitar Gabby



Photo by Kenny Bobby



Photo by Kenny Bobby

Music has been a part of Shevonne Philidor's life for as long as she can remember. She's been playing guitar for the last 13 years but is quick to distinguish herself as an entertainer first and guitarist second. She draws inspiration from the entertainment flair of Prince, the vocal mastery of Whitney Houston, and the style of several movies that she loves.

In her interview, Philidor tells us about her favorite gear, how she goes about making new music, and how she defines her sound.

Tell us your name, where you are from, and what you always wanted to be when you were growing up.

My name is Shevonne Philidor. I'm from Tampa, Florida, and when I was younger, I always wanted to be a singer or an astronaut.

How long have you been playing guitar, and what got you into playing?

I've been singing my whole life, and I've been playing guitar for 13 years. My mom got me my first guitar when I was 15 years old. I started writing songs when I was 16, but I really started playing seriously at the age of 17.

What does music mean to you? And, how (if at all) do you think music helps to bridge the gap between people around the world?

Music has created a platform for me

to inspire and to love, and has given me the freedom to let go and be myself. Music is the universal language that everyone understands, even the birds.

Let's shift gears to music. What are you currently working on in the studio?

I'm working on my second album right now and much more. My sound has grown so much, and I can't wait to share it with everyone.

How would you describe your sound and how you start your creative process?

I would describe my style as alternative soul. My sound is a mix of rock, R&B/soul, and indie. When creating, I usually start with making a chord progression, and then I start writing lyrics to it.

I love your photoshoots and content you post on Instagram. Do you come up with photoshoot themes by yourself?

I've picked the location and dressed myself for all of my photoshoots! Honestly, I don't really think about the theme. Instead, I go for a mood or a vibe.

Talk us through gear. What companies are you endorsed by, and what are your go-to pieces of gear?

I am endorsed by Luna Guitars. My favorite Luna right now is my Gypsy Exotic Black/White Ebony acoustic-electric guitar. It's a great acoustic guitar for a rock star! It has a wild energy to it that I love.

Artists and the industry have been suffering during COVID-19. How have you been getting through the pandemic?

At first, I was really worried about whether or not I would ever play again! I'm a full-time artist, so it was scary. However, I decided to

not worry about it and just let the universe take care of it. So I decided to focus on self-love and introspection. I meditated, read books, spent time out in nature, and hung out with my cats! I also wrote some songs, and then all of a sudden, shows started happening again. I live in Florida, so I'm very grateful for things being pretty open here with live shows!

Who inspires your sound and look?

I've been inspired by so many. I'm an entertainer first, singer second, then a guitarist. My inspiration mainly comes from Michael Jackson, as well as Prince since he played guitar too! As for vocalists, my inspiration comes from Whitney Houston and Aretha Franklin. Prince has been a huge inspiration to me all across the board. He didn't care what people said. I love his confidence, and his guitar skills are literally amazing! I always said if I could just be as good as Prince on guitar, I'd be satisfied with my playing!

My look is inspired by a few things. So if you take a pirate, scarecrow, clown, and cowboy and mix it up, it'd be something like that. I'm very inspired by movies when it comes to looks!

Tell us three of your favorite artists you are currently listening to and two artists that no one would guess you like.

I am currently listening to M83, Vulfpeck, and Thievery Corporation. Something people wouldn't expect is that I love musicals and movie scores, so Hans Zimmer's compositions for *The Lion King*, *Interstellar*, and *Gladiator* have been some faves. I've also been listening to the music from one of my favorite musicals, *Les Misérables*. The soundtrack from that show is amazing! 🎸

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My look is inspired by a few things. So if you take a pirate, scarecrow, clown, and cowboy and mix it up, it'd be something like that. I'm very inspired by movies when it comes to looks!



National Archives Archaeological Site (public domain)

Growing up in the Deep South within the era of the Great Depression, Odetta's initial love for music blossomed through hearing the painfully honest tales sung by the struggling people throughout the 1930s. Continuing to be musical throughout her adolescence, Odetta eventually graduated from Los Angeles City College in 1950 with a degree in music. Soon after while singing in a traveling chorus, Odetta found herself in San Francisco and deeply submerged in an obsession with folk music.

Odetta gained notoriety with her first solo album *Odetta Sings Ballads and Blues* and live recordings of her performance at Carnegie Hall. The 1960s proved to be Odetta's most significant years. Throughout this time, Odetta used her influential voice to promote black equality. Performing at rallies and demonstrations, Odetta gave one of her most widely acclaimed appearances on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial after being introduced by Martin Luther King Jr.

In 1999, Odetta was awarded the National Medal of Arts; in 2004, she was named a Kennedy Center Honoree, and in 2005 she received the Living Legend Award by the Library of Congress. Odetta's music was so powerful that it would later be christened the "Soundtrack of the Civil Rights Movement" and go on to influence musicians and activists alike for generations.



TAKE FIVE WITH CURLY HENDO

BY Guitar Gabby

Hailing from Sydney, Australia, Emma Henderson, better known as **Curly Hendo**, has played bass for over 10 years. Her journey started at the age of three when she fell in love with the idea of combining dance and music, so she began learning how to merge the two. She is a graduate of Berklee College and has inspired many people around the world with her tenacity and desire to always aim high. Advocating for people to chase their dreams and live their lives to the fullest, Curly Hendo talked us through some of the elements that helped to mold the bassist she is today.

Tell us a little about your musical background. How old were you when you started playing guitar, and what inspired your passion for music?

When I was three years old, I started learning dance. I loved the idea of combining movement with music and the immersive experience of performance, but at the same time, I really wanted to become intimate with the process of making music. I began trialing a number of instruments to explore my love of music, but I was always drawn back to the immediate connection that I had with the electric bass and the awareness that it provided as I started out on the truest path of my musical journey. Exploring dance and music at large quickly helped me to realize that the bass provided the framework for both to exist as they do. When I started playing bass in school around the age of eight, I immediately felt a spiritual connection. There was a natural extension of self in how the music made me feel. It was transformative and helped me to continue on.

My inspiration came from one of my music teachers who had mastered a number of

instruments, but I always noticed that when he played the electric bass, it transported him into an exploratory realm of countless performances. This, in addition to my learning path with the Australian Music Examinations Board (AMEB) Rockschoo, helped me to explore a diverse range of styles and genres that pushed me to higher levels of excellence throughout the years.

What inspires you to wake up every day and continue pursuing your dreams?

I have a love for life and the opportunities you gain from embracing it every day. I feel blessed that my passion for music has provided me with a career. This "life alignment" provides boundless energy, focus, and effort to evolve and explore musical performance. I truly believe everyone can achieve their goals and dreams with the right mindset. When I was 15 years old, I watched Bruno Mars's Super Bowl performance, and it lit a fire inside of me to create and perform at the highest professional levels. Constant practice, performance, and my international travel (pre-COVID) have been fueled by a belief in reaching my dreams.

Also of importance in both inspiration and in taking steps to pursue my dreams has been the opportunities to collaborate with many talented musicians around the world. It opened my eyes to the truly global community of musicians awash with inspirational ability and "journey stories" shaped and nurtured by a unifying passion for music. This creative journey has been a blessed accelerant in both my development as a musician and in providing amazing opportunities that both pave my path and craft new dreams for my journey ahead.

Take us through your songwriting process. What types of environments do you feel you

need in order to be your most creative?

I have a home studio, which is where I feel most creative and generally evolve bass lines for songs. I love to layer emotion and technique to evoke the tones and frame for the tracks I am creating. I always make sure I know where I'm going with the bass line and that I have a whole understanding of the different parts of the song. Normally, I will do different takes of laying down a solid bassline, then takes of going crazy and overplaying. I also love listening to a diverse range of genres and experimenting with different arrangements.

What guitars are you playing right now? Name your top two or three, if possible.

My first electric bass when I was eight years old was a Yamaha RBX170y 4-string bass with 24 frets. I still keep this much-loved bass in my music studio as a fond reminder of the beginning of my bass journey. When I was 18, I bought a Sadowsky RV5-PJ bass. Switching to a 5-string was a game changer, but most importantly, this bass was one with style, shape, quality, and sound. Having the low B string gave me so many options. I absolutely love the Sadowsky basses and had the absolute pleasure of meeting the owner, Roger Sadowsky, in New York.

My top two basses at the moment are my white and black Sadowsky basses. My white bass is super lightweight, which is great for gigs where I'm standing and performing for a long period of time. Roger makes great bass guitars of such a high level of quality.

Finish this sentence: I believe music...

I believe music explores the essence of our spirituality and redefines the expanded extremities of ourselves. —

CELISSE:

Paying Homage to the Godmother of Rock and Roll

BY Guitar Gabby



Photograph by Austin Nelson
Location: Black Rabbit Rose

Oakland native **Celisse** embodies the spirit of the rock and roll legends that came before.

Like many, she was inspired to pursue music from a young age. Looking up to Sister Rosetta Tharpe, she developed a burning passion for the guitar which eventually pushed her to begin taking lessons at her local community college. Fast forward to 2021, and she continues to influence the world with her killer guitar skills.

Celisse's name made its way around the industry, leading to opportunities such as paying tribute to Sister Rosetta Tharpe on her *Saturday Night Live* (SNL) performance with Lizzo and working with Jon Batiste, Mariah Carey, and many more. Music has always played such a major role in Celisse's life, and she hopes to connect with listeners as she freely pours her soul into playing.

Let's start by telling us where you are from and what you dreamt of being as a kid.

My name is Celisse, and I'm from Oakland, California. I've always wanted to perform for as long as I can remember, and it is all I could dream of doing growing up. So much so that I began pursuing a career in this industry from a young age.

Let's talk about what got you into playing the guitar. How did you find guitar, and what was the first song you learned to play?

I got into playing guitar at 18 years old when I bought my first acoustic guitar, and then I took a beginner guitar

course at my local community college. At first, I only knew four chords, but I loved to play them for fun. For most of my time playing guitar, I did not take it seriously until about eight years ago when I decided to play the electric guitar. I fell in love with it rather quickly, and the rest is history.

Let's talk about your *Saturday Night Live* performance with Lizzo. For so many guitarists, this was one of the most beautiful things to see on national television because Sister Rosetta Tharpe was never given the proper credit that she deserved. Being a pioneer in rock and roll, she was and will forever be a huge inspiration for so many people out there. Tell our readers what made you say, "I want to use this moment to honor the Godmother of Rock and Roll."

Well, first and foremost, I want to give the credit where it's due; it was initially Lizzo and her team's idea to put me on. Sister Rosetta Tharpe is a huge influence of mine, and Lizzo's team was well aware of that, which ultimately led to my performance on *Saturday Night Live*. Having the opportunity to work with Lizzo's team in honoring one of the most important musical innovators in our history was a dream come true. For any folks interested in learning more about Sister Rosetta Tharpe, I would highly recommend the book *Shout, Sister, Shout!* by Gayle Wald; it is a beautiful portrait of the life and career of the legendary Rosetta Tharpe.

Speaking of the style and swag of Sister Tharpe, how would you

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A huge part of my life and has influenced so much of who I am today that music is simply everything to me.

describe your guitar style? Tell us about some of your guitar influences and why.

I am self-taught as a guitarist, so describing my style can be tricky; however, I always try to approach my guitar playing from an authentic place. For example, I played drums for a few years growing up as a kid, so my style of guitar playing is inherently rhythmic. My style is also quite guttural, mostly influenced by my singing and piano training. I also find that being a self-taught guitarist brings me a sense of intimacy in my playing, which allows me to truly be in the moment when performing live.

What are some qualities that you believe young women need to have as they enter into the music industry?

I believe that women in this industry need to cultivate a strong sense of self outside of the entertainment world. There are so many things about this business that can make someone question their value. Over the years, I personally found that prioritizing my well-being and self-confidence is a game changer.

What are some highlights of your career thus far?

I have been truly blessed with some wonderful opportunities in my career thus far—being a principal actress in the revival of *Godspell*

on Broadway and working on television shows like *30 Rock*, *Rescue Me*, and *The Electric Company* has been a blessing. Also, working with artists such as Jon Batiste, Melissa Etheridge, Mariah Carey, Trey Anastasio, and Patti Austin have been highlights. My most recent highlight would be releasing a signature artist pedal with Keeley Electronics.

Let's talk about your guitar(s). What is your go-to right now, and what are the specs on it?

My main guitar is a 1963 Les Paul (SG) Custom "Reissue" in Alpine White with gold hardware. It is by far my most toneful and resonant guitar—three PAF pickups; ebony neck; big, juicy frets; and vibrola arm (which stays in tune quite well).

What is one thing you want readers to take away from your music?

It is my greatest desire to speak to people's hearts and souls with my music. I hope that when someone listens to a song I wrote, they feel understood and potentially more at home with themselves.

Finish this sentence: Music is...

A huge part of my life and has influenced so much of who I am today that music is simply everything to me.



Deborah Coleman was eight years old when she picked up a bass after witnessing a televised performance by the Monkees. It wasn't until her teenage years, when her love for Jimi Hendrix, Cream, and Led Zeppelin emerged, that she exchanged the bass for a guitar and began following the roots of rock and roll back to the soulful basic blues.

After performing with a series of R&B bands, Coleman had almost quit pursuing her musical career to raise her daughter. Returning to the limelight in 1985, Coleman collaborated with the all-female group Moxie which began her experimentation into developing her own sound and eventually led her to join the R&B trio, Misbehavin'. After minimal success, Coleman forged her own path when entering the Charleston Blues Festival's National Amateur Talent Search. Taking first place in the competition, Coleman was awarded free studio time. This prize provided Coleman the opportunity to record her album, *Takin' A Stand*, which was succinctly followed by a record deal.

Coleman then produced a string of blues albums that initiated her win of the Orville Gibson Award for "Best Blues Guitarist, Female" in 2001, and four nominations for the WC Handy Award.

By Javier Díaz Barrera (originally posted to Flickr as Deborah Coleman) [CC BY-SA 2.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons



Photo by Jesse David Green

TAKE FIVE WITH DEEKAH ROX

BY Guitar Gabby

Detroit native Deekah Rox is more than a guitarist. She is a guitar instructor, an all-around boss, and the founder of the Cosmic Slop Music Festival, Southeast Michigan's first Afro and Latino rock festival. With more than 25 years of guitar playing under her belt and a drive to succeed, Rox has truly shown what it means to represent the culture.

Inspired by the music of Nirvana and Jimi Hendrix, she continues to use her gift to uplift others around her. Rox talked us through the things that inspire her the most as she continues to rock out with the Cosmic Slop Music Festival's 10th anniversary kicking off this Fall 2021.

Tell us a little about your musical background. How old were you when you started playing guitar, and what inspired your passion for music?

I was 13 when I got my first guitar and formed a band called Generic with a few homies of mine. But for as long as I can remember, I've been a performer—singing, acting, and modeling since I was seven or eight years old. It was discovering Nirvana

that made me want to write my own songs. My pops introduced me to Jimi Hendrix, and that really made me realize rock and roll was just the blues in leather pants.

What inspires you to wake up every day and continue pursuing your dreams?

My 13-year-old son. He's watching me, and it's my job to show him how to live, so I do what makes me happy. I wouldn't be happy doing anything else. Being crazy and clever enough to pursue my dreams is in my blood. I come from Hawaiian ukulele masters and Georgia bootleggers with stubborn Detroit urban farmer/outdoorsman roots. We do what fulfills us, and we make sure everybody gets enough to eat. Somehow, it all works out.

Take us through your songwriting process. What types of environments do you feel you need in order to be your most creative?

Songwriting happens in a few different ways for me. However, it ends up coming together and is definitely driven by the melody. I can usually hear the melody in my head even before the lyrics are written, in which case, I'll end up playing the chords over and over

again until I can make it make sense to me. In order to be my MOST creative, I just need a little solitude, a few light snacks, and a pot of strong coffee.

What guitars are you playing right now?

Right now, my favorite guitar to play is my 2009 silver sparkle-fleck Ibanez ART100. I love to play with pickup textures and sounds, so I had my tech install Seymour Duncan Hot Rodded Humbuckers (SH-4 JB on the bridge and SH-2n Jazz on the neck). This guitar is rosewood, so it gives me a beefy and warm sound, which I absolutely love.

My other favorite is my vintage Fernandes Strat, which, if you remember, was part of the Fender lawsuits in the late '70s-'80s. I was gifted this guitar by a friend after my initial model was stolen. It mostly has original parts, but it is a workhorse!

If I'm playing guitar in bed, which is often, then it's my 7/8-scale Washburn Mini Dreadnought acoustic.

Finish this sentence: I believe music...

Is the voice of God. We should all take time to be still and listen. —

April KAE

An Advocate for Creativity and Activism

BY Guitar Gabby

April Kae attributes her career as a bassist to growing up in Austin, Texas, where she felt that playing the guitar would make her too much a part of the crowd. Despite being discouraged early on when she didn't fit the type to play the bass, she persisted. Now, you'll find her playing in her band, IMANIGOLD; serving as an endorsed artist for Fender Guitars; and partnering with Nike.

In her interview, April reflects on the role that music played in her teenage years, classifies her sound, and takes us through her writing process. Alongside her music career, April is a social media influencer. She discusses how she's working on balancing both, lessons she's learned from being a content creator, and the importance of prioritizing mental health above everything else.

Who is April Kae?

April is a loving, resilient, determined, and bubbly woman, who brings a lot of energy to the table, and loves connecting with like-minded people.

So you grew up in Austin, Texas, which is home to some of the greats like Gary Clark Jr. and Janis Joplin. Tell us what it was like growing up with the desire to play instruments. How old were you when you first started playing?

Growing up in Austin, I was always into different genres of music, so playing bass, guitar, and drums was a fixation of mine for as long as I can remember. My parents weren't huge fans of the drums because of how loud they were, and there were so many people in Austin playing the guitar; it was eye-rolling at a point. I picked up the guitar at the age of 10 but then quickly switched to bass because there weren't as many people in the city playing at the time. In the sixth grade, I decided to join the school orchestra, which consisted of an entire bass section of six-foot-tall white men. I even had a music teacher tell me that I shouldn't play because my hands were "too small." Looking back, there was likely some thinly veiled sexism (and maybe a bit of racism), but all of these were experiences that helped me to grow into the person that I am today.

So, take us back to the 13-year-old April. What were your career goals, and what were you listening to to get you through your hard times? When I was a teenager, I was honestly depressed because, at the time, that was really central to everything I was going through. I began to fall in love with emo music because I connected with how sad it was. I remember playing the song "My Bloody Valentine" by Good Charlotte over and over again and crying and just feeling so in it. I would go on LiveJournal song exchange forums and download everything I possibly could

labeled "emo." I'd rip the songs I would download to CD and listen to them on my portable player all the time. My friends and I would bring our CD collections to school and take turns seeing what bands we each were listening to: Hawthorne Heights, Brand New, Dashboard Confessional, Taking Back Sunday, and so many more.

When it comes to what I wanted to be when I grew up, I was still trying to figure that out as a teenager. I was a good kid in the traditional ways; I had good grades and extracurriculars, but what I was going through back then was serious and going unnoticed and untreated. There were things I enjoyed doing, like music, but that's where it stopped for me. I really didn't like myself back then, but now, I do, and often it can be overwhelming. There is so much I want in life, and it's all centered around wanting to help other people.

How would you describe your sound/music?

Genre-wise, I'm an indie rock player. Americana for 2021 America. Beyond that, throughout my producing, songwriting, bass, guitar, and singing, I like to keep it tasteful. I like to keep it in the pocket. There's a Miles Davis album called *Kind of Blue* that is amazing to me because of the way he stretches out notes and lets long pauses linger. He brings in catchy and simple melodies that have all been the prototype for the vibe I want to create. I think part of that comes from how easily distracted I can be. I like music that

Photo by Tommy Rizzoli





Photo by Tommy Rizzoli

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I've always been an advocate for creativity and activism. As a teen, I was very involved in the local youth music scene and organizing benefit concerts.

has an element of everything being in its place. I like straightforward, listenable music that's easy to like and sneaks up on you with its brilliance.

Take us through your writing process. How do you write your music? Do you get triggered by certain things that might inspire the process to start?

Over time, I've learned to really let go as a writer, and I think that comes from doing a ton of writing over the years, not just music. I used to run a digital publication for a social justice nonprofit at the same time as I was building up my independent career as an influencer and musician. I did a ton of writing to the point where writer's block became a non-issue, and now I can pretty much always sit down and write something if it needs writing, including music. I don't always like forcing myself to write, but the skill to do that comes in handy when it is needed.

My songwriting process now pretty much consists of making stuff up on guitar and vocals, recording it, and if it is something that I like, then I keep it. If I don't like it, I change it. My band's name is IMANIGOLD, and the EP we are working on releasing consists of several songs that I wrote the skeletons

for. Over time, we honed in on them, but now my bandmate and sister, Dominique (Nikki), and I are working together from the beginning writing stages now more than ever, which is awesome. After we have the basic chords, melody, and lyrics written out, we practice the song and continue making tweaks until we have a reason to stop. It can take days, months, or even years, but I love to let my ear and heart guide me.

Who is on your list to collaborate with?

EVERYONE! I love to collaborate across all sorts of industries: fashion, culinary, film, television—let's make things together! But to get specific, Jaden Smith has been an amazing supporter since he shouted me on Instagram a month or so ago. I would love to create with him on a visual or musical tip. Same goes for Willow Smith—I love her new song, "Transparent Soul." The way the dope sibling duo elevates "Black weirdness" is so incredible and something I want to be more a part of. They have definitely been an inspiration for IMANIGOLD. It showed us that siblings can do amazing things together.

For years, I've been posting on Instagram about wanting to tour with Blink-182, so when I saw that Willow featured Travis Barker, I immediately knew that they would be part of my dream power trio: Willow Smith, Travis Barker, and myself. Also, this interview is already fulfilling a collaboration dream with Guitar Gabby! When you hit me up to create this with you, I let out an audible scream. The way you have cultivated this powerful, forceful, underground multifaceted Black-femme first community and message is something I've looked up to for years. I also have to mention Radiohead and Death Cab For Cutie. They are both massive influences on my songwriting and my approach to music.

How do you balance music and being a boss influencer?

If I'm being transparent, I don't have a lot of balance right now. I feel bad saying that because I want to be an example of self-care and all that, but right now, that's just not where I'm at. But mental health care will always remain non-negotiable for me, as it's the platform on which the balancing scales rest. I go to individual and group therapy every week, and sometimes it doesn't happen, but 90 percent of the time, it does. Amidst my crazy work schedule, I put a lot of energy into setting aside time for things I love and need in life.

When it comes to my work schedule, I am constantly working from the time I roll out of bed, which tends to be between 7 a.m. and 9 a.m. I try to go to sleep around midnight, but I often find myself staying

up until 3 a.m. on TikTok just to laugh for a bit. There are certainly gaps where I'm not working and spending time with friends and family, but a day doesn't go by that I spend less than a few hours working. My sister, on the other hand, genuinely shoulders half of that work, which is fantastic. She does most of the visuals for our duo, but with the world opening back up and us continuing to build our brand, there are never-ending amounts of work. We self-produce our music videos and photoshoots, so we are both very hands-on with everything we have going on.

I'm trying to do better at being gentle with myself while also delegating some of these responsibilities to other people that work with us. Most days, it's a fun learning experience, so I'm grateful.

What is one of the most important things you have learned while building your social platform to where it is now?

Social media isn't real. This has been both helpful in my life and in growing my platform. Thinking that your Instagram page has to perfectly reflect who you are or your work can be a sinkhole that a lot of artists fall into. In my experience, getting caught up in this notion leads to a complete disconnect where you don't want to post at all, or you end up stressing yourself out to unhealthy measures. I like to think my Instagram isn't a "highlight reel," and I make an effort to show the ups and downs of my worlds, but it's impossible for it to capture all of who I am, and I like to maintain some degree of privacy.

I also have to remind myself that social media is a tool, a very powerful tool that can be a life-changing tool. I keep that in mind as I perceive others around me on the app. I don't find myself "doom scrolling" as much as I used to because I've gotten better at seeing other people's posts simply as images they share, rather than a condemnation or wild celebration. As a creator, that's freeing for me. If I post a bass reel and it's a little out of tune, or it's kinda weird, that's okay because it's not all of me as a musician, and certainly not as a person.

What is your go-to home setup for recording music and content?

Well, my first video that went viral was on a Mexican-made, cream-colored Fender Precision Bass. It cost less than \$500. I also used the Universal Audio Apollo Twin, which we used to record our IMANIGOLD EP. I get comments under my bass videos all the time where people assume I'm recording with a regular-shmegular amplifier, but I live in Harlem, so recording with that amp can be problematic. It is so loud that even recording direct-in with headphones

can still be so loud that I can't hear myself playing through speakers. So yeah, going direct-in is a must. I also like that my work represents the notion that you don't have to "have everything" to make your mark as an artist. Those two pieces of gear, the Apollo Twin and the bass, still cost over \$1,000 combined, so I hesitate to call them humble. But compared to the rigs I grew up idolizing, it's a pretty humble setup. I've never thought about the line between content creation and recording until this question. In 2017, IMANIGOLD put on a fundraiser. We built an entire home studio, which included insulating my closet and making it into a vocal booth that was imperative for recording at home. Even with this setup, it took me a month to record my first viral bass video because that was me bridging those two worlds that I hadn't bridged much before.

Do you have to have certain environments that you are most creative in?

My bedroom, for sure. Even before the pandemic, we already had the recording studio set up in our apartment, and I had worked from home in years prior, so having a productive space has always been important to me. I recently rearranged things so I could face the windows more while working and recording. One thing I've come to appreciate over the past year is the sky and the sun.

What is one piece of advice you would give young kids following in your footsteps?

I've always been an advocate for creativity and activism. As a teen, I was very involved in the local youth music scene and organizing benefit concerts. Being so young in a "serious music city" like Austin, I dealt with all sorts of pushback, but I just kept going. I kept finding new ways to do what I was passionate about. If one venue said no, I had nine more I was ready to reach out to. I became unafraid to ask and equally unafraid of rejection. My heart races when I think of how much I've achieved since then. It's unreal. And it happened because each time I got a "no," I stuck to the vision and the mission. I always remind those that listen to my podcast to keep creating and to persevere. Make what you want to make. Build the world you want to build. It's all up to you. 🎸



Photo by Tommy Rizzoli

Celebrated singer-songwriter Joan Armatrading's new album, *Consequences*, via BMG released in digital version on June 18, 2021, with the CD/LP set to drop August 13, 2021. This is Armatrading's 22nd studio album to date and is said to be "one of her most intimate and direct albums yet and one that wears its conscience and its heart on its sleeve."



**Consequences
Tracklist:**

1. Natural Rhythm
2. Already There
3. To Be Loved
4. Better Life
5. Glorious Madness
6. Like
7. Consequences
8. Sunrise (instrumental)
9. Think About Me
10. To Anyone Who Will Listen





IMANIGOLD:

The Soundtrack of Our Generation's Fight for Black, Queer Liberation

BY Guitar Gabby

IMANIGOLD is more than just a band. Started by sisters Nikki and April Kae to be "a soundtrack to our generation's fight for Black, queer liberation," IMANIGOLD is also an art collective for marginalized voices to express themselves. Much of the social justice progression and encouragement of creativity that IMANIGOLD fights for can be found on their blog at imanigold.com.

In this interview, Nikki Kae covers a little bit of everything—from her and April's start as artists and musicians, to why it's important to create space for marginalized groups, to IMANIGOLD's creative process, all the way to giving advice on the best way to start something as out-of-the-box and exciting as IMANIGOLD.

So IMANIGOLD is a sister duo. Tell us who makes up IMANIGOLD and where you two are from?

So my name is Nikki Kae, my sister is April Kae, and we make up IMANIGOLD. We're from Austin, Texas, but we've been living in Harlem for about six years now.

Let's jump right into IMANIGOLD. You all have a unique business setup. Tell the readers a bit about the IMANIGOLD Collective and some of the parts of that tree.

IMANIGOLD is the soundtrack to our generation's fight for Black, queer liberation. We're always growing. We love to see people do what they enjoy and are good at. April and I are the band IMANIGOLD, but IMANIGOLD is a collective that has initiatives outside of music.

April and I are the heartbeat of IMANIGOLD, an indie rock band and art collective seeking to create spaces for marginalized people to gain strength and heal. IMANIGOLD's music is an unlikely cross between Odetta and Tegan and Sara, telling vulnerable, honest stories and inviting listeners in as family. IMANIGOLD is based in Harlem in New York City. We're excited to start playing shows again, and are performing at two outdoor festivals this summer.

As the IMANIGOLD Collective, we make art, share stories, and educate. We have a social

justice and art blog (imanigold.com/blog), where we promote progress, social justice, creativity, and greater possibilities for all people to self-actualize, especially the most historically marginalized people.

One thing that makes you all unique is the fact that you are both sisters and work well together. You all are very in sync. Can you talk a bit about how music started for you both and how you came to begin making music together?

We come from a musical family and have been singing together since we were babies. Our parents met when our mom auditioned for our dad's band in college. My sister and I both played in jazz band in school and played in our own punk bands outside of school all through middle and high school. As I said, April and I have always sung together. April is my favorite person to create with. There had also been a point early on, when April had started writing this EP, that we decided to make it official and call ourselves IMANIGOLD.

How long has April been playing the bass and guitar, and how long have you been creating visuals?

April has been playing bass for about 20 years, and I'd say about the same for myself visually. April started playing bass in the orchestra and jazz band in middle school, and I was in band and choir too, as a singer and saxophone player. Our mom is a piano and voice teacher, so we always had a piano around we would play on. I always painted and drew. I've loved making mood boards from magazine clippings for decades. April bought me my first camera for my 13th birthday, and my dad got me a generic version of Photoshop, and I really got into photography. I think it was a great art form because I didn't need to take up space to make it. I only needed people and my camera.



Photo by Sasha Kay

Can you talk a little bit about your creative process? What do you pull from to create coherent and cohesive visuals?

April and I have been piecing together this aesthetic for years. Anything I do is typically inspired by '70s-'90s-Y2K retrofuturist aesthetic, but I'm also obsessed with the repetitive chaos of industrial machinery and industrial waste. Utopian and dystopian dreamworlds and blaxploitation. Definitely a lot of '90s-early aughts animation. I usually work on multimedia paper with a combination of Sharpies, India ink, charcoal, scanners, and Photoshop.

IMANIGOLD is a particularly personal project, so when I was building the aesthetic, I wanted it to be very true to what felt natural and easy to me. So, for example, when it came to the logo—I'm not a typographer or logo designer, but I have been playing with this elongation version of my own handwriting for years, and I finally found the perfect home for it.

How would you describe your sound/music?

The IMANIGOLD sound can be described as a mix of indie pop, with heavy punk and folk influences.

Why is it important to you to create spaces for marginalized groups of artists to feel comfortable being themselves?

It is important to create spaces for marginalized groups of artists so that they feel comfortable being themselves for two very personal reasons. First, because I often feel like an outsider, and I want spaces for myself and my friends. Second, I want to live in a world with all the art and expression that comes from the proliferation of these spaces.

Take us through your music writing process as a team. Do you work together on each component of your music, or do you work off of each other's energy?

April was about to go study for a semester abroad in Italy when her best friend died from suicide. She decided to still go through with the trip and take the time for herself to heal and connect. She also wrote this EP as part of that process. After returning, April and I started playing the songs together. The songs are nearly unrecognizable from what April wrote in Italy, but they came from love.

Who influences your sound?

In the same way that we have been building our aesthetic over a lifetime, we have been building the sound of this EP for a lifetime. Some massive visual and sonic influences are Tegan and Sara, Blink-182, Best Coast, and Alkaline Trio.



Photo provided by artist

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When it comes to the creative process, when I aim for what feels “right” rather than what feels “perfect,” I complete more work, and I have more fun.

Do you have to have certain environments that you are most creative in?

The space that is made for what I'm doing is my own studio with all the materials I need. No one else is around or in earshot, and I don't feel encumbered, influenced, or judged. I think I come up with most of my ideas outside of the studio by absorbing and collecting experiences. But I tuck them away to become what they are meant to be when I'm surrounded by my creative tools and past work.

What is one piece of advice you would give to someone that wants to follow in your footsteps?

When it comes to the creative process, when I aim for what feels “right” rather than what feels “perfect,” I complete more work, and I have more fun. —

WILLIE MAE ROCK CAMP FOR GIRLS

Don't be misled by the name thinking it's your typical one-week music camp for girls where they learn instruments and put together a rock band.

Willie Mae Rock Camp in New York City offers so much more. Founded by former Executive Director Karla Schickale in 2004 as The Working Group, the nonprofit organization has grown over the past 16 years into a program to empower “girls and gender

expansive youth to find their voice and express themselves loudly and freely” through music and social justice.

While music is part of the program, the organization also offers workshops on social justice, Afrofuturism, podcasting, digital music production, songwriting, and more.

Willie Mae
**ROCK
CAMP
FOR GIRLS**

ZANDY MOWRY:

MUSIC AS A UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE

BY Guitar Gabby

Zandy Mowry has not always known that she wanted to be the guitarist that she is today. Growing up, the Nashville native went through many ideas of what she wanted to do with her life—from interior designer to lawyer. Now, she is the guitarist in a band that she started a decade ago with her best friend, Jasmine, called the New Respects.

In her interview, she talks about how she got into guitar, her musical influences, and starting the New Respects. In addition, she discusses the need for diversity in the industry, using music to bridge the gap between different cultures, and what it takes to be a killer artist in today's music scene.

Tell us your name, where you are from, and what you always wanted to be when you were growing up.

My name is Zandy Mowry, and I'm from Nashville, Tennessee. Growing up, I wanted to be so many things. I wanted to play in the WNBA; I wanted to be "the next Missy Elliott"; I wanted to be an interior designer, a counselor, or a lawyer. Now, I'm a full-time guitarist.

How long have you been playing guitar, and what got you into playing?

I have been playing guitar for 11 years now!! My

twin sister and I used to want to be like "Aly & AJ," so one year my parents got both of us our first acoustic guitar as a Christmas gift, and I've never looked back.

What does music mean to you? And, how (if at all) do you think music helps to bridge the gap between people around the world?

Music means so much to me. It gives me a whole other means of communication when words fail. It is truly a universal language. I watched it happen in 2018 when we were playing in Colombia. For all of our interviews, we needed a translator because we didn't speak Spanish, but the moment we started playing songs, it was as if we all spoke the same language. Music dismisses our differences and gives us common ground to stand or dance on. Music is so open and inviting that anyone who's listening may feel a connection or be enticed to love.

Let's shift gears to the New Respects. How did the band form, and how would you describe your sound?

My best friend, Jasmine, and I started the band back in high school, and we have put our blood,

“ I believe any artist entering into the industry should have a passion for what they do. You need a reason to stay when it gets difficult. You need joy, community, and a good work ethic.

THE ROASTERS

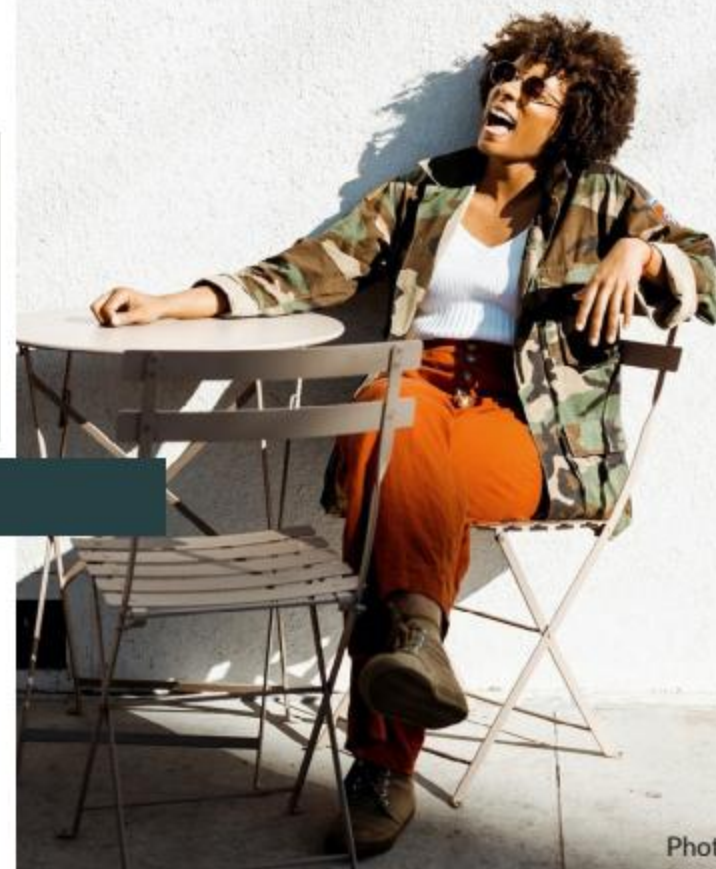


Photo by Isaiah Beiser

sweat, and tears into it over the last 10 years. We found the best way to describe our sound is "pop-soul / rock and roll." It's a blend of it all that we love and is always evolving.

What are some qualities that you believe young women need to have as they enter into the music industry?

An important quality I believe young women need to have as they enter into the music industry is a sense of identity! Know who you are and never forget it.

How important do you think diversity and inclusion inside the music industry are?

Diversity and inclusion inside the music industry are very important! There would be no music industry without the very diverse people who contributed to making it what it is today. People of color, specifically Black women, have paved the way for many genres, artists, and guitar players that we know and love.

Let's talk about your 2017 break out EP, *Here Comes Trouble*. What was your favorite part of making that EP, and how would you say your fan base received it?

Wow! That album process was a whirlwind. I think we had two weeks to record that entire project because we were in between tours, so everything had to be done fast. We still work with the same team who helped us with that album to this day. We call ourselves the "LIT FAM SQUAD"! I'm thankful

to be blessed enough to make music with people who listen to our vision and then make it better than we thought it could be. Our song "Trouble" was on that EP, and it's still our most-streamed song yet. We couldn't have asked for a better response from fans.

What do you want the listeners to take away from listening to the New Respects?

When the listeners hear the New Respects album, I want them to feel joy, a sense of belonging, hope, and their best dance moves!! We put a lot of prayer, laughs, time, and joy into the music so that each song is packed full of it when it gets to the listeners' ears.

Who are some of your guitar influences?

Some big influences of mine would be John Mayer, Nile Rodgers, and Brittany Howard. I wasn't exposed to a lot of the great Black female musicians until much later, but I also love Elizabeth Cotten, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, and Memphis Minnie. I remember I was on tour and walked into a library because I had time to kill before our soundcheck. I chose a random book about guitar players and started flipping and saw "Memphis Minnie" a few pages in and was mesmerized. I saw someone who looked like me doing what I love, and it made me feel that if she belonged, so did I.

What is your go-to guitar that you currently play, and the rig setup to go with that?

My go-to for electric guitars is my Strat from Elliott Guitars; I play it every single show. It's a one-stop shop for all I need a guitar to be, and it's a beautiful instrument. I feel very fortunate to have one of their guitars. I play on an amp called the JT-14 from Tyler Amps, which is amazing, and, of course, I have a whole lot of toys on my pedalboard. My three favorite pedals on my board are the Julia from Walrus Audio, which is a chorus/vibrato; the Flint by Strymon; and the Protein by Browne Amplification. The Protein is an overdrive pedal that has a low gain and high gain that you can stack for a really huge dirty yet warm drive. It's awesome!

What are a few qualities that you believe all artists must have as they enter into the industry?

I believe any artist entering into the industry should have a passion for what they do. you need a reason to stay when it gets difficult. you need joy, community, and a good work ethic. Be kind to everyone and trust the process. What is meant to be will be. 🎸—



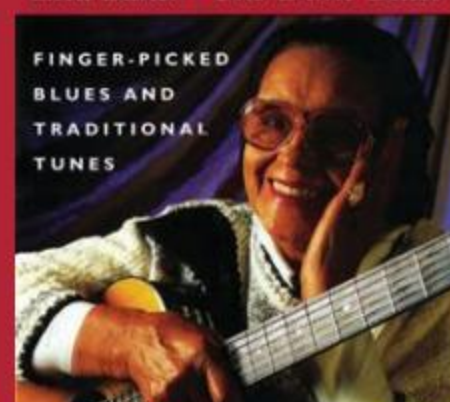
Photo by Isaiah Beiser



Photo by Blue Amber

Etta Baker was taught how to play guitar and banjo by her father, a skill that had been passed down in their family for generations. This kindred talent prompted her performances at local dances and parties, where she experimented with hymns, parlor music, rags, and Tin Pan Alley songs. She all but ceased live performances to raise her family, but in 1956, Baker contributed to Paul Clayton's *Instrumental Music of the Southern Appalachians*. This album would go on to become one of the key influences towards the legendary Folk Revival of the 1960s. At age 60, Baker decided to professionally pursue her musical career and went on to become a smash hit in the international folk festival circuit. Playing well into her 90s, as well as being awarded with the 1991 Folk Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, Baker is celebrated for her iconic two-finger guitar picking style, driving rhythm, and undeniable impact within the folk and blues genres.

Etta Baker • One-Dime Blues



Etta Baker "One-Dime Blues" album cover

CARRYING THE TORCH FOR BLACK GIRL MAGIC

Jennale Adams

NYC-born and -raised guitarist Jennale Adams started her career at the age of 10. Inspired by some of the greatest like Jimi Hendrix, Joe Satriani, and Prince, she always strived to inspire the generations behind her by showing what it means to follow your dreams. Pulling inspiration from the tenacity of Gary Clark Jr. and the blended Latin riffs of Carlos Santana, to the confidence and Black Girl Magic of Guitar Gabby, guitarist Jennale Adams is building her own path in the industry to continue highlighting what it means to play from the heart.

From a young age, Adams has always been in love with music and performing on stage, whether it was with her high school band or solo at a local club in Harlem. She is self-taught and has dedicated a portion of her career to educating others who share the passion for learning music. Adams seeks to one day share the stage with Gary Clark Jr., Carlos Santana, Lenny Kravitz, and Guitar Gabby.

So tell us where you are from and what instrument(s) you play.

My name is Jennale Adams, and I am from Queens, New York. I play the electric guitar, the acoustic guitar, and the piano.

How long have you been playing, and when did you know you wanted to be a musician?

I've been playing guitar for about 15 years now, and I knew since I was around the age of 10 that I wanted to be a musician. I was always drawn to music, so it made sense for me to just follow my calling and pick up the instrument that inspired me the most, which was the guitar. I aspire to inspire as many women and girls who look like me who often feel like they never fit in. I knew from a young age that my passion for music was my purpose, so I decided to put all of my focus into becoming the guitarist/artist I envision in my heart.

What is the best part about being a musician?

The best part about being a musician is the freedom of expression and the ability to share my love for music with others. I love being able to educate others on the importance of music in this world. I love that I get to be my true, free and expressive self. Music is something that called out to me at a very young age, and it is the foundation of my life. Part of my journey is to inspire as many people as I can and to lead by example, doing something I love every single day. I count blessings for that.

What do you think of when you hear "Black History Month"?

Black history happens every day, and it is important to honor and respect those who have come before us. We have to be grateful for their sacrifices and the foundations they laid for us to continue on. Black history is the essential history of America and the rest of the world. The contributions of Black people are valuable and essential to our day-to-day lives. What Black people have done from music alone transcends across generations, from Sister Rosetta Tharpe to Cab Calloway, James Brown, Algia Mae Hinton, Prince, Michael Jackson, Bob Marley, Nina Simone, Anita Baker, Beyoncé—I mean, the list of trailblazers is never-ending. Black history is the genesis of everything from music to some of the biggest innovations in science, education, sports, and much more. Appreciating these things and educating those that come after us is important and needed.

Is there a specific Black creative that inspires you? Why?

For me, the list of Black creatives that inspire me are Jimi Hendrix, Prince, Michael Jackson, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Janet Jackson, Sade, Beyoncé, and Gary Clark Jr. The reason why I chose these creatives as my inspiration is because all of them have left their irreplaceable individual mark on this world, and they are all original in their own right. There's no comparing them to anyone. A lot of these people are the standard of excellence in music. They are the level of artistry where I wish to be one day.

Why do you think it is important to pay homage to the Black creatives that came before us? Why do you think the world needs to learn about our Black history?

I think the history of Black creatives who have come before us gave us the foundation of excellence through constant sacrifice, overcoming racism, and also handling the challenges of being the first in many of their fields. I think it's important to talk about the contributions and sacrifices that were made to allow us today to better appreciate where we

came from as we work towards our own versions of success.

What are your current studio and live performance setups? Are they different?

I keep it simple; it's either two to three of my electric guitars—my Fender Stratocaster, my Trampas PRS in green, or my natural Fender Strat. I also use a Fender Mustang III amplifier, a BOSS RC-30 pedal, and a Dunlop Cry Baby pedal.

What does it mean to be a Black womxn to you?

Being a Black woman means to be fearless, to exude power, and unapologetically believe in yourself. You also have to be brave and shake off a lot of negativity that is directed at you. It also means to love who you are and be an example of excellence for the women who will follow in your footsteps one day. Being a woman of color is one of the coolest things ever, but it almost means that no matter what I do, I am leaving a legacy for the women of color who come after me as well as creating a support system for my sisters around me. It's not easy, but it's my purpose, and I am grateful.

What's one piece of advice you would give to your eight-year-old self looking up to the adult version of you?

Trust the vision you have for yourself and for your life. There will be challenges; you'll have to fight your way to see your dreams accomplished. You are worthy of being an artist, and the music inside of you needs to be seen and heard. You have what it takes. Being a musician and a woman of color is one of your superpowers. Be kind to yourself and have faith in your vision. Put love into everything you do and never lose passion for your dreams. Thank God for your blessings. 🙏

Photo Courtesy of Artist with permission to use



CARRYING THE TORCH FOR BLACK GIRL MAGIC

Ashilee Roberts, aka “Ashilee Ashilee”

Ashilee Roberts, aka “Ashilee Ashilee,” is an award-winning film score composer, multi-instrumentalist, audio engineer, vocalist, and music producer. She has helped sculpt the sounds of many artists today, including Trippie Redd, Latto, Lil Wop, Cherae Lerí, Coca Vango, and many more. Ashilee loves collaborating with other producers such as Jerry Wonda, Drumma Boy, 808 Mafia, Ear Drummers, and more producer pals for various projects.

After playing first chair viola in the Metropolitan youth Symphony for six consecutive years, she decided to create her own music and became an audio engineer and music producer. Playing 11 instruments, she seeks to continue learning as much as she can about music and frequency control while continuing to score music for films and helping to develop artists' sound worldwide. If music is the game, Ashilee is the name.

So tell us where you are from and what instrument(s) you play.

My name is Ashilee Roberts, but I go by Ashilee Ashilee. I'm from Southfield, Michigan (Detroit), and I play a lot of instruments—the viola, violin, cello, upright bass, electric and acoustic guitar, bass guitar, piano, and hand drums.

What does it mean to be a Black woman to you?

To be a Black womxn in this world means you always have to persevere no matter how high the odds are stacked against you. To be a Black womxn in this world is to be a creator and nurturer for the culture and mankind in general. To be a Black womxn is to be the blueprint.

Why do you think it is important to pay homage to the Black creatives that came before us?

Black history is the celebration of all the positive contributions African Americans have made and continue to make in this world. I think that it is important to know your history and culture so you can effectively build a better future for the next generations.

List some influential musicians that inspire you and why?

Sarah Chang, the violinist; Queen, the band; and Quincy Jones, the music producer. They're all so innovative with music and have done something big for the first time within the music industry.

What Black artist are you listening to right now?

I actually don't listen to much music (not enough to name a lot of artists on top). Honestly, I just create music, and I often enjoy the silence because it allows me to dive into the ideas that circulate in my head.

Share one piece of advice for any of those young girls, womxn, LGBTQ+, and trans people watching and looking up to you.

Learn to say “no” in every adaptable way. People will try to change your sound, direction, image, and message just because of your gender, but don't let them. Stay true to yourself; don't let anyone even think they can take advantage of you in any way, shape, or form, and always carry yourself with self-respect.

Do you have any upcoming projects you are working on that you would like to share?

I'm working on a collaborative album right now called *All My Friends Are Famous*, because I work with some amazing artists, and some have millions of supporters. In contrast, others have only a couple, but they have a similar talent level. So I'm putting them on songs together to cross-promote and build a great body of art with one album with all my amazing music friends. 🎧

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CARRYING THE TORCH FOR BLACK GIRL MAGIC

Netta Sherrell

Netta Sherrell is a multi-instrumentalist who is pursuing a career as a freelance bass guitarist in Chicago. Growing up classically trained in alto saxophone, she quickly realized she wanted to be part of the driving force of the band. After attending Columbia College Chicago, she began heavily pursuing a career in the music industry. Being part of a musical family, her love for the bass guitar grew more over time and has now become indescribable.

Influenced by some of the greatest, such as *Justin Timberlake + the Tennessee Kids*, Stevie Wonder, Boyz II Men, Pino Palladino (D'Angelo), Sharay Reed, and the musicians of the *Hamilton* Chicago company, Sherrell continues to be a beacon of light for those that need a pick me up. She is a member of the international Black female rock collective the TxLips Band and seeks to inspire girls and women of color everywhere to shine as bright as they possibly can as they follow their dreams.

So tell us where you are from and what instrument you play.

My name is Netta Sherrell. My pronouns are she/her. I am from Chicago, and I play the bass guitar.

How long have you been playing, and when did you know you wanted to be a musician?

I've been playing bass for under three years, but I knew I wanted to be a musician when I was around eight or nine years old. I was classically trained on the alto saxophone throughout college, then switched to bass guitar a few years after college.

What is the best part about being a musician?

I would say the opportunity to do what you love! I have so much fun playing and learning from other musicians. It gives me a certain fulfillment that I absolutely need in life.

What do you think of when you hear "Black History Month"?

A time to really focus on Black Excellence, although I believe this should be an everyday thing. I think it is important to remind the world of our culture and contributions to push people towards a conscious effort to gain a higher appreciation for the Black community.

Is there a specific Black creative that inspires you? Why?

At the moment, I would say Natasha Banks. She is a Black musician here in Chicago that plays the bass guitar, keys, and does some production. I love her style; her creative mind is out of this world, and her musicianship is excellent.

Why do you think it is important to pay homage to the Black creatives that came before us?

It's important because it's just generally right to give credit where credit is due. Without their creative contributions, the world would not be what it is today.

Why do you think the world needs to learn about our Black history?

With a country so divided, I think it's important to shine a light



Photo by Jessica Thompson

on Black history and the positive impacts it has had on our society. Can you imagine what history would look like in America without Black history??

What are your current studio and live performance setups? Are they different?

Both of my setups are relatively the same. I'm endorsed by Lakland, so I play the Custom Skyline Series Bass. One of my favorite amps is the Gallien-Krueger MB 212 Amp; I play the Combo Amp. I pair that with my BOSS Chromatic Tuner, Livewire Cables, a Comfort Strapp, and Eargasm IEMs. In the studio, I might add an octave divider or chorus pedal. I also use Logic or my iRig 2 for recording.

What does it mean to be a Black woman to you?

To me, it means being educated, strong, fearless, independent, driven. But also having the constant pressure of needing to be "perfect." That, in itself, is stressful. I want to show that you don't have to be perfect to showcase your Black Girl Magic.

What's one piece of advice you would give to your eight-year-old self looking up to the adult version of you?

Do what makes you happy. Not what you think will make others happy. —

CARRYING THE TORCH FOR BLACK GIRL MAGIC

Alena Ciera

Twenty-five-year-old singer-songwriter **Alena Ciera** is a D.C. native and no stranger to music. In her prime, she has played for the Bela Dona Band, Yolanda Adams, Lil' Maceo, Kala and The Lost Tribe, CeeLo Green, TRu potential Band, and her very own band, 1Identity. Using music as her voice to remind people that they are never alone, she has been impacting people all around the world with her single "Invincible."

Endorsing companies such as Empire Ears and Dunlop, she seeks to continue using her diverse sound and platform to fulfill her purpose as an artist. She has been playing for 17 years and believes that in music it is first and foremost important to be herself and, secondly, to inspire those around her to do the same.



Photo by @action_jacksonent

So tell us where you are from and what instrument(s) you play.

My name is Alena Ciera, and my pronouns are she/her/hers, and I play the guitar.

How long have you been playing, and when did you know you wanted to be a musician?

I have been playing guitar since I was six years old, and I'm 25 now. I knew I wanted to play guitar when I heard the band Linkin Park. I heard the rock riffs and rock music, and I just knew that playing guitar and performing was what I wanted to do.

What is the best part about being a musician?

The best part about being a musician is being able to connect with the audience with your songs and having them engaged and making them a part of the show. Another thing that I believe is the best part is traveling.

What do you think of when you hear "Black History Month"?

When I hear Black History Month, I think of all my ancestors that made a difference for me and the Black society today so that we could have a better life. But to also continue to fight for our rights and what we believe in by making this world a better place, not just for us but for those who come after us.

Is there a specific Black creative that inspires you? Why?

Who really inspires me the most creatively would be Brandi. Brandi inspires me by not just being her and being humble but also by her singing and having a great controlled voice.

Why do you think it is important to pay homage to the Black

creatives that came before us? Why do you think the world needs to learn about our Black history?

I think it is important to pay homage to the Black creatives that came before us because without them we wouldn't be where we are today. The world needs to learn about Black history because I believe that people need to know and learn about the past and who changed things for the society of Blacks and how they made a difference.

What are your current studio and live performance setups? Are they different?

Right now, my current studio is a home studio. But if I have to record something that I can't do at home, then I'll go to a studio that's like home to me, which is at 38 North in Falls Church, Virginia. My live performance setup isn't any different at all; it's pretty much the same. I use a Taylor 214 Acoustic-Electric guitar, a Fender Stratocaster with a Line 6 HX Stomp, Joe Bonamassa Wah pedal, MXR Distortion, Xotic EP Booster, Xotic SP Compressor on a Blackbird pedalboard, and SORRY Cables. I also use my Custom In-Ears by Empire Ears.

What does it mean to be a Black woman to you?

To me, being a Black woman means to be Empowered, Determined, Ambitious, and Invincible.

What's one piece of advice you would give to your eight-year-old self looking up to the adult version of you?

One piece of advice I would give my eight-year-old self would be to continue to strive to be the best version of yourself and to never let go of your daydream. —

TONE TALK WITH CHENA ROXX



Born in Nigeria and raised between the Netherlands and Maryland, Chena Roxx is one hell of a metal guitar player. She has been playing guitar for 12 years and loves many styles, but shred metal has always been one of her favorites. Endorsing companies like Jackson Guitars, Roxx believes

in using her guitar skills to inspire other girls to shred. Always looking to learn new techniques, songs, and styles, she incorporates it all into her everyday playing and seeks to continue being a truly well-rounded guitar player and musician.

What is your definition of tone, and how has it changed over the years?

Tone, to me, is character. It's a huge element of making your guitar talk. A great tone is emotional, has feelings and dynamics, is memorable—it needs to give me chills. I used to just cover my tones with high-end distorted tones; now, I think I'm more sophisticated. I prefer lots of mids in my tone and more low-end; I love depth.

Which guitars, amps, and pedals are you currently using and why?

I'm proud to say I endorse Jackson Guitars; I have a collection of 7-string Pro Series models. A sandblasted Dinky HT7, a Soloist SL7, and a Signature Dave Davidson Warrior—all locked and loaded with Fishman Fluence pickups.

What about strings?

I don't have any preferences really with the brand of strings I use, but I play 7-string guitars fitted with 9 gauge strings because I still do a lot of bending on my guitars.

Are there certain recording techniques you prefer in the studio?

I'm still learning how to record my guitars better and better. I like double and quad tracking; it just makes my guitars sound mean.

Also, I record with a DI box so I can explore different tones via re-amping, especially with my large set of Neural DSP plugins and OwnHammer impulse responses.

How do you keep your sound consistent onstage?

Before I hit the stage, I usually set up all of my tones in a way that I am completely confident and happy with. I use a floor modeler, so it's all saved on there, and I can toggle depending on my needs for each song. This makes switching to my rhythm, clean, and lead tones an easy process, especially with the help of my Neural DSP tones. I'll be getting their new floor modeler and the Quad Cortex soon (which is a total game changer). The quality, easy-to-use software is the core of having epic, consistent out-of-the-box playable tones.

What does your practice consist of?

My practice regime is always changing depending on the areas I want to focus on. These days, I'm working on really learning the fretboard, memorizing all the notes, working on my control, dynamics, and playing more complex tunes that I can get interesting licks and techniques out of.

What is your advice for young women who hope to work in the music industry?

I think young women should just continue to do their best and find influences in a wide range of musicians. Never feel that you will be held back because of your gender. We are so capable of greatness. Anything is possible if you put your mind to it. 🎸

MALINA MOYE ANNOUNCES SIGNATURE GUITAR STRINGS WITH DEAN MARKLEY USA

Guitar sensation Malina Moya has been added to the prestigious Dean Markley Artist Series guitar strings roster. A longtime user of Dean Markley Strings, Moya swears by them, "I love the strings and have been using them for years. They retain tone, don't break, and just last. The top end is bendable and has great sustain, while the bottom packs a punch."

Malina's signature line is the (9-42) gauge Blue Steel

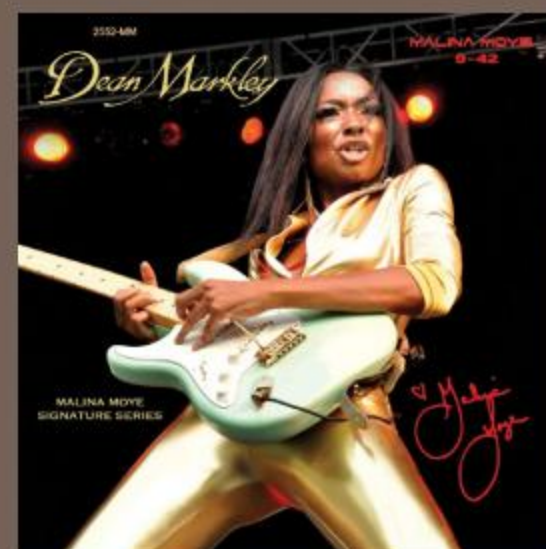
Electric Guitar Set. The strings are Cryogenically treated strings to enhance tone and are Made of 8% nickel-plated steel outer wrap on tinned Mandolin wire hex-core that creates a longer-lasting durable string.

Chart-topping recording artist Malina Moya has made history as a guitarist, reached number one on Billboard, and continues to break boundaries with every album. Additional

Dean Markley USA Artist Roster signature artists are Orianthi, DJ Ashba (Sixx:Am, Guns & Roses), and Lita Ford, to name a few

The new Malina Moya line became available for purchase on July 4th and will be part of the Dean Markley Annual Star-Spangled Sales Spectacular Event. For more info, visit Deanmarkley.com.

Source: Press Release



TONE TALK WITH GENNY JAM

Genny Jam is a passionate, no-holds-barred axe grinder, who plays infectious funk rhythms with a hard rock attitude. She has amassed a wealth of accomplishments in recording credits and television performances.

She began her professional career touring with recording artists Salt-N-Pepa, Hi-Five, and Crystal Waters and performing in stadiums and venues around the U.S., Europe, U.K., Japan, and Malaysia. She had the honor of gracing the stage with artists Keke Wyatt, Stevie Wonder, Estelle, Chrisette Michele, Erykah Badu, MC Lyte, and the legendary "Godfather of Go-Go," Chuck Brown. She is the hired guitarist for Klymaxx, featuring Bernadette Cooper, and performs locally in the D.C. area with her band, Pebble to Pearl. She is also co-founder and creative director for Fret Sisters, an online community highlighting female musicians in strings, as well as editor/co-host of their exclusive podcast, *Between Frets*.

Beyond her success as a performer, she is an award-winning designer, video editor, and composer. Her work has won numerous awards and been recognized nationally by the advertising industry.

What is your definition of tone, and how has it changed over the years?

I see tone as a bunch of flavors. It can be clean, dirty, creamy, warm, raw—even delicious. It can come from different guitars, pedals, and amps, but I truly believe it's in your fingers. It took me a while to find my "aesthetic" tone. I went through a bunch of amps and stompboxes vs. multi-processors. I love clean tones with a bit of delay to monstrous rock sounds. Even though I'm satisfied now, I'll always want to explore.

Which guitars, amps, and pedals are you currently using and why?

My two main guitars for performances are the Experience PRS 2012 Custom 24 and PRS Silver Sky. These guitars are very versatile in any hire situation. For acoustic gigs, I use a Taylor 410ce. I also have a lot of other guitars that are on hand for recording sessions. My main amp is the Mesa Boogie Mark Five: 35. I'm in love with this amp. It gives me a clean, friendly tone and a wonderful hard rock flavor. It's small but very loud. For smaller gigs, I use the Orange Crush Solid State. This amp is superb for the intimate R&B/jazz shows.

My main pedalboard consists of many delightful stompboxes curated for my main gig. This includes the DigiTech Whammy Ricochet, MXR MC404 CAE Wah Pedal, Xotic SP Compressor, two distortions: Radial Tonebone Classic and Wampler Triple Wreck, BOSS DD-7 Digital Delay



Photo by Micky Freedman

Pedal, TC Electronic Spark Booster Pedal, Electro-Harmonix Holy Grail Reverb, and three MXR analog pedals: Carbon Copy Delay, Chorus, and Phaser. For smaller intimate gigs, I use the BOSS ME-80 Effects Processor.

What about strings?

For my PRS guitars, I use the PRS Classic Strings 10-gauge. On my Tele and Strat, I use D'Addario XL 9-gauge, and on my Taylor acoustic, I use Elixir Phosphor Bronze light gauge.

Are there certain recording techniques you prefer in the studio?

For the studio, I prefer playing through an amp, whether it be my own or a studio setup, and I always bring my pedalboard if it requires more sounds. I track better with headphones, especially if I am recording with a band. The usual process for me when it comes to recording with a band is to lay a scratch track mainly to get the drums recorded. Once the drums are recorded, I would lay down tracks for each guitar part. For smaller sessions where I'm tracking clean R&B/funk flavors, I would sometimes go direct and let the engineer color it.

How do you keep your sound consistent onstage?
My ear has developed enough to let me know

what sounds right and what sounds terrible. In any setting, if I'm using a backline amp or my own gear, I somehow know how much to add or adjust to get exactly what I need. I've even gotten to the point of adjusting knobs on the fly while playing. Fun stuff!

What does your practice consist of?

Most of the time, I am charting music for hired gigs. Stuff like this helps me learn new techniques and keeps good practice for my muscle memory. I also add a 15-minute warm-up during the day to loosen my hands. Finally, for wellness, I exercise each morning consisting of cardio, free weights, and stretching. This helps clear my spirit and keeps me in shape for onstage performance.

What is your advice for young women who hope to work in the music industry?

If this is your passion, if this is your drive, if you want this, then do it, but know that you must practice, practice, practice. Nothing comes overnight. It takes hard work, but if you truly love your craft, then it will not feel like work. Know your weaknesses and be prepared for failures. And that's okay; even the best out there make mistakes or have a bad night. We all go through it, and we learn from it. That's why we do it. Word up! 🎸

TONE TALK WITH ISSIELLE JOHNSON, AKA ICE



Photo by @chrizdigital

Issielle Johnson, better known as "Ice," has been playing guitar for eight years. Her videos showcase her talent, which has led her to be endorsed by Ormsby Guitars, LK Straps, and Stringjoy. She recently released her second album, *Solitary*, which follows her debut album, *Reclaim*, in 2019. Ice seeks to continue on her musical journey in hopes of inspiring girls everywhere.

What is your definition of tone, and how has it changed over the years?

Tone, to me, is simple; it's your "feeling" in that moment, but I feel that tone will always evolve. I use different pedals, amps, and digital software to communicate my story to my audience. My tone went from just using an amp and morphed into something unique by adding pedals and now using digital software for effects.

Which guitars, amps, and pedals are you currently using and why?

I use the EarthQuaker Transmitter pedal (which is very heavy), Neural DSP pedals, and Fortin amps A

LOT. Recently, I've been digging the Beetronics Swarm pedal.

What about strings?

Stringjoy is my baby; I use 10s all the time.

Are there certain recording techniques you prefer in the studio?

I am very simple when it comes to recording. You may hear some imperfections here and there, but hell, I am human. I usually try to record things in one take, but I have learned so much from people I have recorded, so I try to take those tips and add them to my recording process to make sure everything is right. I am learning the more I do, so I continue to grow and am on the path to getting better and better.

How do you keep your sound consistent onstage?

I learned a lot early on in my live playing experience that led me to keeping it simple. I try to use maybe one to two pedals and stay in tune. That's all you need!

What does your practice consist of?

Chromatic scales, hammer-ons, pull-offs, stretching the hands and fingers, and jamming to random tracks.

What is your advice for young women who hope to work in the music industry?

1. BE CLEAR with what you want!
I had to discover this along the way but learned that it definitely pays off in the long run.
2. Being nice can be dangerous at times. There is nothing wrong with loving people and being nice, but you do have to remember to keep your best interest at heart in everything you do.
3. Be CLEAR with what you're looking for and how you want to sound.
4. Be yourself! Don't listen to the naysayers. Believe in yourself and mean what you play. You got this. 🎸



Photo by Bobbi Rich

Brittany Howard's GRAMMY®-Nominated Album, *Jaime*, Has Been Reimagined

Set For July 23 Digital Release And September 24 Physical Release, *Jaime Reimagined* Also Features Contributions From Childish Gambino, Common, Syd, EARTHGANG, Bon Iver, Michael Kiwanuka, and more.

Jaime – the first solo album from Brittany Howard – has been reimagined by an astonishing cross-section of the five-time GRAMMY winner's peers. Featuring fresh takes and remixes of the album's 11 songs, *Jaime*

Reimagined will be released by ATO Records.

Howard noted, "Making *Jaime* was so much fun for me because I was able to explore so many different genres of music. There were no rules. This reimagination project has been no different. I have been honored to have so many incredible artists from all musical worlds interpret my songs in such interesting and different ways."

Source: Press Release



Track Listing – *Jaime Reimagined*

1. "13th Century Metal" Michael Kiwanuka Version
2. "Goat Head" EARTHGANG Version
3. "Stay High" Childish Gambino Version
4. "Presence" Little Dragon Remix
5. "Short and Sweet" Bon Iver Remix
6. "Tomorrow" BadBadNotGood Remix
7. "Baby" Gitty Remix featuring Syd
8. "History Repeats" Georgia Anne Muldrow Geemix
9. "Georgia" J Most Remix featuring Emily King
10. "Stay High again.." Fred again.. & Joy Anonymous Version
11. "He Loves Me" 9th Wonder Remix featuring Common
12. "History Repeats" Jungle Remix
13. "Run To Me" Laura Mvula Version

TONE TALK WITH TASHA MARIE

Tasha Marie is a singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist from London, England. She started playing a variety of instruments in childhood and was writing/composing songs by the age of 11. Marie has been playing guitar for 12 years, amassing experiences such as playing in a church ministry, working as a session musician, and gigging as a solo artist. She is currently learning music production and working on her first EP titled *My Identity*.

What is your definition of tone, and how has it changed over the years?

I define tone as a musician's signature sound or fingerprint that is unique to them. I have multiple definitions! I didn't really know much about tone when I first started guitar—I just liked distortion and loads of effects on everything. Nowadays, I usually prefer warm and simplistic tones, but I have different preferences for specific genres.

Which guitars, amps, and pedals are you currently using and why?

My main guitar is my PRS SE Custom 24. It gives me the warm tones I like, but is also versatile if I need a very different tone. I use minimal pedals. I work with the Chord CH-50 Chorus, Dunlop GCB95 Cry Baby Wah, and BOSS ML-2 Metal Core Distortion. I usually play funk, rock, and reggae—those pedals carry those genres perfectly.

The main acoustic guitar that I gig with is an Ashton J59S. It has a rich and twangy tone.

The main amp that I gig with is a VOX VT20+. It is perfect and practical for when I gig in various venues and works with acoustic guitar, as well.

What about strings?

Ernie Ball Slinky strings are my favorite, specifically the 9s. I use Rotosound JK12s for my acoustic guitar.

Are there certain recording techniques you prefer in the studio?

I like to experiment. Sometimes I use plugins and features on Ableton. But when it comes to riffs that need heavy distortion or wah, I prefer to record with the pedals directly instead.

How do you keep your sound consistent onstage?

I tend to keep the levels the same on my guitar, pedals, and amp. When I'm playing with a band, I use an additional volume pedal as the master control, then adjust it accordingly.

What does your practice consist of?

I usually start off with a warm-up, then focus on modes and improv. Next, I incorporate new chords, techniques, and music theory. After that, I work on the songs that I'm learning or practice my originals.

What is your advice for young women who hope to work in the music industry?

Embrace what makes you unique—that is where your strength and power reside. Don't allow anything or anyone to break your spirit or kill your confidence. You will face challenges, resistance, and arrogance as a woman in the industry, but you've got what it takes to achieve your dreams, so go and get yours! 🎸



Photo by Jacob Hilton

SHE SAID!



Photo by Sam Madnick

"I think the biggest thing was not taking 'no' for an answer and not accepting when people would tell us that it wasn't possible. Sometimes other bands or the powers that be like you to think this way to keep control, but nothing can outweigh the impact of hard work and real fans and supporters rallying behind you. When you're good, you don't have to beg; you earn things. We always just work hard to be the best. We know the rest will always follow." ~ **Diamond Rowe**

Excerpt from interview:
Diamond Rowe of Tetrarch:
Driven to Succeed
By Alexx Calise

As seen in
Guitar Girl Magazine Issue 9 -
Autumn 2019
Ladies of Metal

"Practice, stand your ground, and get around players better than you and learn. Also, ask questions, and don't be afraid to fail." ~ **Malina Moye**

Excerpt from interview:
Tone Talk With Malina Moye
August 2020



Photo by Joshua Schultz

Find your voice and commit to it. Take the time to develop all the skills needed to hone your craft. Search out mentors and teachers. Believe in yourself and go for it!
~ **Eljuri**

Excerpt from interview:
Tone Talk with Cecilia Villar Eljuri
April 2019



Photo by
Manovill
Records



"Go for it! Don't be afraid to conquer any song. Don't be afraid to jump into any jam session, even if it's a room full of boys. The only way to become great is by playing with those who are much better than you." ~ **Nik West**

Excerpt from interview:
Love Affair: An interview
with Nik West
By Lindsey Borders and
Tara Low

September 2019
As seen in
Guitar Girl Magazine Issue
8 - Spring 2019
It's All About the Bass

Photo provided by artist's team



"Be prepared to work your ass off and hold your cards close. you're going to need a team, keep the team mean and lean, and never get desperate. Be patient." ~ **Jackie Venson**

Excerpt from interview:
Tone Talk with Jackie Venson
April 2019

Jackie Venson performed at the Jewelbox
Theater in Seattle, WA on August 16, 2019
Photo by Kirk Stauffer



Melanie Faye at the
Showbox SoDo on April
16, 2019 -
Photo by Kirk Stauffer

"Because of studying at that school, I came to the realization that R&B chords, neo-soul chords, and gospel chords are all using the same chords: jazz chords. When I found that out, I was able to play the music I grew up on and identified the most with. I also learned the history of guitar and modern music. A lot of seemingly different genres overlap and use a lot of similar structures because they're stemming from the same source of music." ~ **Melanie Faye**

Excerpt from interview:
Melanie Faye: From Guitar
Hero to Guitar Heroine
By Tara Low

As seen in *Guitar Girl Magazine*
Issue 6 - Winter 2018
Holiday feat. Orianthi

"...be humble and always strive to be better than you were yesterday." ~ Moriah Formica

Excerpt from interview:
Tone Talk with Moriah Formica
June 2020

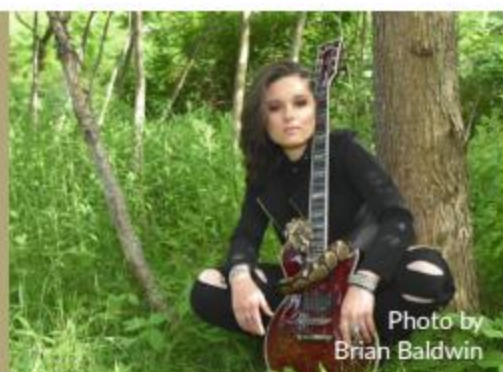


Photo by Brian Baldwin



Photo by Courtney Gurlie

"It's sad to me that our country built by immigrants, is a place so driven by an us-versus-them mentality. My music, my message, is that our diversity is what makes us beautiful, not our sameness. I am Catholic and a married lesbian. I am Latina and I am white. I can be in different worlds as a bridge, not a wall that divides." ~ **Gina Chavez**

Excerpt from interview:
The Inspiring Gina Chavez on her Diverse Sound, New Releases, and the Motivation Behind her Empowering Music
As seen in *Guitar Girl Magazine* Issue 12 - Summer 2020 Issue
Keep Austin Weird



Photo by Ismael Quintanilla III

"Keep going! Do NOT stop and do NOT allow anyone to tell you what you can and cannot do. It will 100% be difficult. It will 100% be rough, but if you remember who you are and stick with it and stay consistent, you will be successful at whatever you set your mind to. you got it, Sis!" ~ **Guitar Gabby**

Excerpt from interview:
Tone Talk with Guitar Gabby
June 2020



"Songwriting has made it possible for me to cope with all of my feelings and all of my frustrations with the world around me. I think as an artist, we have to capture both the most beautiful parts of life and the darkest." ~ **Raye Zaragoza**

Excerpt from interview:
Raye Zaragoza: "It's time to rise up, turn off the television, and take a stand."

By Tara Low
March 2018

"My Nigerian background does influence my style and the way I make music, especially my original compositions. The kind of music we listen to influences our creative ideas as musicians, and it's important to me that I showcase my roots in my sound by incorporating local instruments. African music is generally rhythmic; this makes me have quite a good feel for time and rhythm, and I am very thankful for that." ~ **Helen Ibe**

Excerpt from interview:
In Conversation with Helen Ibe: Philanthropy, Creativity, and Individuality
By Marissa Bergen

As seen in *Guitar Girl Magazine* Issue 15
Electrified!



Photo provided by artist

"... but the one thing that always cheers me up is composing and writing. I always write music from the same place: a desire to detach myself, escape, and feel empowered by something I'm making." ~ **Yvette Young**

Excerpt from interview:
Journey Forward: Yvette Young on Music and Healing
By Alison Richter

As seen in *Guitar Girl Magazine* Issue 9 - Autumn 2019
Ladies of Metal



Photo by Lily Pearl McLaughlin Photography

"... know your worth. Walk and talk that. Because as women, we get underestimated all the time. It's important to know that you are worthy of being in this industry or any walk of life, really Just walk and talk it, and you'll be all right." ~ **Ruthie Foster**

Excerpt from interview:
Ruthie Foster: It's About Setting the Table for Joy
By Alex Windsor

As seen in *Guitar Girl Magazine* Issue 12 - Summer 2020 Issue
Keep Austin Weird



Photo by Riccardo Piccirillo