

MG




proaudio

Epiphone GARAGE to STAGE

SA ROCK
LEGACY
RETURNS

TREE
63

MEET THE ARTISTS

 Thando Ngada
 Anna Savage
 Musa Zwane

The
HEADLESS
Bass Reborn
STEINBERGER


HISTORIC
REISSUES

MAESTRO
GUITAR PEDAL
REVIEW



SCHOOL OF ROCK

PARKTOWN NORTH
MEET AYLA & MIKE



WELCOME TO THE JUNE EDITION OF PROAUDIO MUSICGEAR MAGAZINE

June is here, and with it comes a season of new sounds, fresh faces, and timeless legends. This month, we're turning up the volume to celebrate the artists, the gear, and the passion that drive our music community.

First up, we're proud to feature the return of Tree63, South Africa's own rock legends, whose timeless anthems have shaped a generation. Their story is one of faith, perseverance, and the power of music to unite across time.

We also spotlight rising stars like Thando Ngada, whose soulful voice is lighting up stages across the country, Anna Savage, who blends honesty with artistry, and Musa Zwane, the Soweto guitarist proving that no dream is out of reach.

On the gear front, we're geeking out over the Aeroband Pocket Drums, a game-changer for on-the-go drummers; the Maestro pedal range, blending vintage tone with modern versatility; and classic guitars from Gibson and Epiphone—the instruments that have defined so many careers.

As always, MusicGear Magazine is your companion in exploring the ever-evolving world of music. From cutting-edge technology to timeless artistry, we're here to remind you that music is more than sound—it's a way of life.

Let's keep playing, creating, and dreaming.

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

Proaudio **MusicGear** June 2025 Edition

"Inspiration, innovation, and the sound of possibilities"

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A South African ROCK LEGACY Returns

Formed in Durban in 1997, Tree63 quickly became one of South Africa's most beloved and successful musical exports. At the heart of the band is singer-songwriter and guitarist **John Ellis**, who has led the group since its inception.

Tree63 first made waves with chart-topping songs like **'Treasure'**, **'Stumbling Stone'**, and **'A Million Lights'**, which caught the attention of US-based InPop Records. Their self-titled US debut album dropped in 2000 and was met with huge success—earning them multiple number one radio hits and the **Dove Award for Rock Album of the Year**.

In 2002, the band released *The Life and Times of Absolute Truth*, featuring fan favourites like **'Anxious Seat'** and **'No Words'**. The following year brought *The Answer to the Question*, which included **'Blessed Be Your Name'**, a Billboard #1 radio hit in 2004, as well as the powerful tracks **'King'** (an ASCAP Song of the Year for John) and **'You Only'**.

After two more albums and years of international touring, the band went on hiatus when John returned to South Africa from Nashville. In 2015, Tree63 reunited briefly to release *Land* and embarked on a successful South African tour.

From 1997 to 2015, Tree63 toured the globe—performing in the **UK, US, Canada, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, Holland, Zimbabwe, Australia, and New Zealand**—and released **seven studio albums**.

Now, in 2024, the band is back.

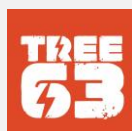
With the full blessing of long-time members **Darryl Swart** and **Daniel Ornellas** (now living abroad), John Ellis is reigniting Tree63 with a fresh lineup and a renewed passion. Fans can look forward to the iconic songs that have inspired and uplifted so many—now delivered with new energy and purpose.

LET'S GET DOWN TO THE INTERVIEW



Let's go back to the beginning.

What inspired the formation of Tree63 back in 1996, and how did the band come together?



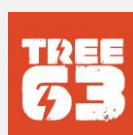
By 1995/96 I had been in a band since high school that nearly made it but didn't quite.

Disillusioned, I went back to varsity to finish my BA. In time I met Darryl Swart who played drums in another Durban band that couldn't quite get over the line. We were both unsure of our next moves.

We got together to make some noise while we waited for the stars to align and next minute we had a trio and five songs. No name, though; "Tree" came later.



The name Tree63 has such a rich biblical and spiritual meaning. How has that symbolism shaped your music over the years?



A tree is a helpful way of thinking about God: deep roots, shelter, shade, fruit.

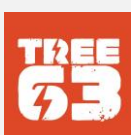
“Tree” was the band’s original name. Our second album was entitled “63” after the 63rd psalm (which was kind of a theme for that album). So yes, ancient imagery to draw on.

When we signed with InPop records in the US, we discovered a band in Boston with the name ‘Tree’ who had registered the “tree.com” domain and refused to relinquish it. The record label suggested “Tree63” as a change and the rest is history.

Our music, like all music, is shaped by spirit: we’re all singing about God in one way or another, whether we know it or not. I’m just more intentional about it.



What was it like navigating the shift from South Africa to the international Christian music scene, especially in the early 2000s?



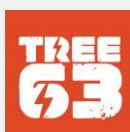
I had no idea that Christian music existed as its own genre. I don’t come from a church background, and when I started writing Tree songs they were just songs that came from my own personal journey toward God.

When we signed to InPop they expected us to participate within the CCM (Christian Contemporary Music) world, which was a challenge: it was a very insular culturally-American vision that didn’t quite fit Tree63.

We became known as a “Christian band” which made it difficult to navigate the shift from SA, where our music played everywhere, to the US where it was just given to the Christian industry.



Winning the GMA Dove Award in 2001 and charting with “Blessed Be Your Name” were major milestones. How did those moments feel, and did they change your journey as a band?

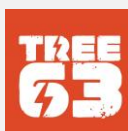


The GMA was a surprise. All these years later I feel like it was too much too soon, to be honest. I don't believe in art awards. Music is not a competition. The US is an extremely competitive society and music there can be just another means to power and wealth. Those are not things I got into music for.

We charted with my own songs for our first few albums, and then the record label wanted us to record a version of “Blessed” which had been written by my friend Matt Redman. Our version was a surprise radio hit, and it opened a few doors for us, but Tree63 is an original band with no need to build a career on cover versions.



You reunited in 2014 after a long break. What brought you back together?



I put Tree63 on some kind of hiatus at the end of 2008. I needed a break, it was exhausting, and I moved my young family back to SA. In 2013 I felt the band hadn't really officially ‘ended’ properly, so we did some shows in SA to acknowledge the band's legacy. There were no plans to reunite, but one thing led to another and in late 2014 I found myself in Nashville writing and recording a new Tree63 album. The result was “Land” which came out in 2015, an album we are all still very proud of.



As individuals, you've all pursued solo paths. How have those experiences changed your dynamic when you come back together as Tree63?



I'm not able to do Tree63 with Darryl or Daniel, they both live in the States and cannot participate. They both gave their blessing for me to start the band up again with new members, Deon Knipe on bass and Angus Warden on drums. Needless to say, Darryl, Daniel and I shared the first few chapters of Tree63's life together and it's a deep connection.



Since the reunion, how has your approach to music changed-either creatively, spiritually, or personally?



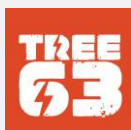
You trust, as a writer and performer, that you get better at your job over time. You

learn to trust all the processes around the making of music and the industry that exists around it. You relax a little when you've learned the fundamentals of your job.

Still, art is endlessly demanding and you can never rest on past successes. Every gig, every new song, is a fresh opportunity to find a new frontier in what you do.

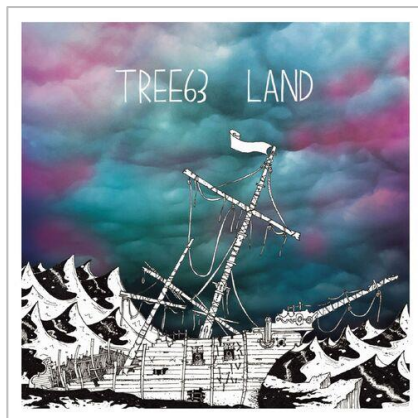


With so much history behind you, what's next for Tree63 in 2025? Are there any projects, tours, or surprises fans can look forward to?



New songs, new ideas, new sounds. Lots of exciting new tools to create with. I'm excited to see what Tree63 can do next!





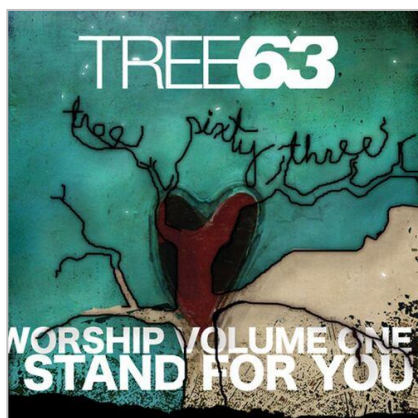
From the bold opening of *Land* to the worshipful declaration of *I Stand For You*, this Tree63 album takes listeners on a deeply personal and spiritual journey. *Land* sets the tone with its raw honesty and themes of searching—a cry for solid ground in uncertain times. It's a powerful opening track that captures the tension between wandering and belonging, between the wilderness and home.



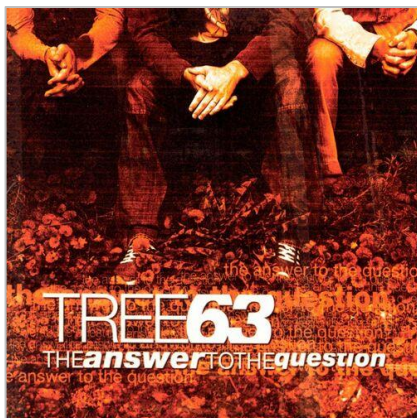
Sunday follows with reflective urgency, pulling apart the motions of religion and calling for something more real, more alive. It's not just about a day of the week—it's about every day becoming a genuine encounter with God. The song pulses with longing, drawing us back to the heart of faith.



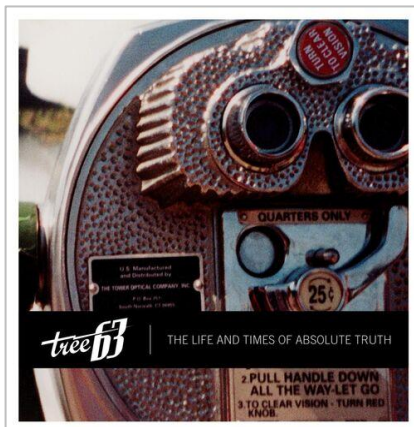
With *Double Take*, Tree63 dives into the internal conflict of identity and belief. The song's layered instrumentation mirrors the emotional push and pull of doubt, hope, and rediscovery. It challenges listeners to examine how often we miss the deeper truths staring us in the face—how often we need a second look at grace.



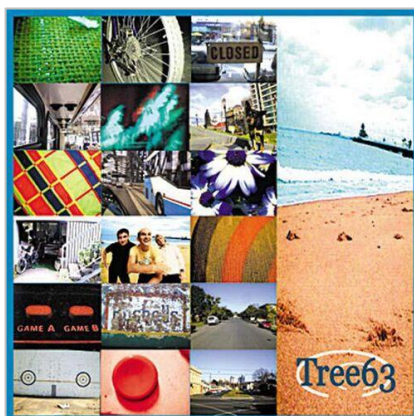
Then comes *I Stand For You*, a powerful anthem of allegiance and purpose. With soaring guitars and an unwavering message, it stands as a declaration of loyalty in a world that constantly tests conviction. It's not just a song—it's a commitment.



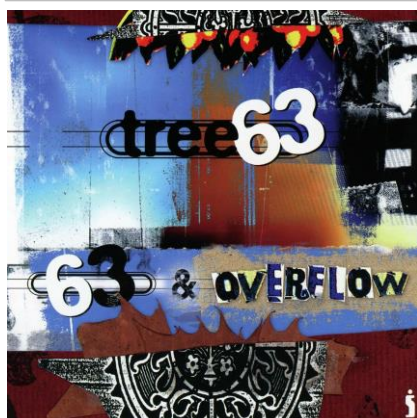
The Answer to the Question opens with quiet strength and builds into one of Tree63's most anthemic collections. *Blessed Be Your Name*, became a global worship phenomenon. *You Only* and *King* speak to surrender and identity in the midst of uncertainty, while *The Answer to the Question* challenges listeners to seek deeper meaning in a world full of noise.



From the first notes of *Anxious Seat*, this album is both confessional and courageous. *No Words* stands as a beautifully aching moment of surrender, while tracks like *It's All About to Change* and *Here of All Places* offer defiant hope in uncertain times. ***The Life and Times of Absolute Truth*** isn't afraid to dig deep—it's a spiritual journal in motion, where faith is forged in the fire of life's biggest questions.



The self-titled debut album that launched it all. *Treasure*, *Stumbling Stone*, and *Look What You've Done* introduced a band willing to blend soaring guitar lines with raw, worshipful lyrics. There's a youthful urgency here—a desire not just to sing about faith but to live it loudly. ***Tree63*** is bold in its simplicity, unafraid to question, to praise, and to stand firm all in the same breath.



63 & Overflow brings together two powerful expressions of Tree63's heart for worship. The 63 side is quiet and intimate—acoustic songs that feel like personal prayers, raw and reflective. In contrast, *Overflow* bursts with energy, capturing the band live in full voice with anthems like *I Stand For You* and *Blessed Be Your Name*. Together, the album moves from solitude to celebration—showing that worship can be both a whisper and a roar.

Epiphone

EIGC63FB1-IVG

1963 FIREBIRD I INVERNESS GREEN

There's something undeniably bold about a Firebird. Its shape is rebellious, its history rich with attitude, and its sound unmistakably alive.

The Epiphone 1963 Firebird I in Inverness Green is a faithful throwback to one of Gibson's most radical designs—now brought within reach for players who demand vintage tone, custom-shop styling, and stage-ready hardware, all in one.



WHY IT'S WORTH IT

This isn't just a reissue—it's a resurrection. With top-tier appointments and period-correct specs, the Epiphone 1963 Firebird I delivers a boutique-level experience without the boutique price. The neck-through construction offers unmatched sustain, while the mini humbucker brings clarity and punch that cuts beautifully through any mix.

WHAT KIND OF MUSIC IS IT GOOD FOR?

From country and folk to rock ballads The Firebird I is a shape-shifter. Its articulate mini humbucker shines in blues, garage rock, surf, indie, and even country.

The snappy response makes it great for rhythm work, while its sustain lends itself well to soaring leads. Think Johnny Winter, early Clapton, or even something a little left of centre—this Firebird carves its own path.

Whether you're tracking in the studio or turning heads on stage, the Epiphone 1963 Firebird I gives you that unmistakable vintage fire—loud, proud, and ready to burn.



“From the first chord, the Firebird I speaks with authority. It’s not just about retro looks—it’s about capturing lightning in a bottle and handing it to the next generation.”



If you're after that raw, expressive voice found on countless classic records—without compromising on modern reliability—this is the guitar to reach for.



It comes with a vintage-style Epiphone
Inspired by Gibson Custom hardshell case—
rugged, reliable, and built to protect your
Firebird in style.



Interview Questions with Bra Tee

THANDO NGADA

Thando Ngada, affectionately known as Bra Tee, is a dynamic South African pianist and presenter known for his soulful performances on the Nord keyboard.

Blind since birth, Bra Tee has never let his condition define his potential. Instead, he has carved out a meaningful path in art, entertainment, and radio, hosting the popular show DownTime Fix on KisimaRadio.

With a deep love for conversation, concerts, and community, Bra Tee believes his God-given talents serve a greater purpose — to uplift the church and impact the world.

His story is a beautiful reminder that true success lies in finishing what you've started, no matter the obstacles.



Tell us a bit about your journey into music - how did it all begin for you?



My musical journey began when I was just a toddler living with my mother's family in a rural village. Interestingly, they were the first to notice I might be blind, when I was about six months old. By age 2-3, I already showed a deep interest in music, often sitting alone by the cassette player, completely absorbed in whatever was playing while everyone else went about their day.

When my parents became more settled, we moved frequently - from Johannesburg, where my mother worked as a domestic worker and my father in the mines, to Cape Town, where he found employment at a spice factory.

During this time, I attended Athlone School for the Blind in Bellville South, staying in the hostel and adapting to a completely unfamiliar environment where I had to learn Afrikaans.

Despite being constantly uprooted, these diverse environments enriched my musical experiences. My mother, who sang in local choirs during her youth, passed down her knowledge of harmony and vocal parts to me and my younger sisters, establishing my musical foundation.

Though my school had an excellent music academy, I was often overlooked for formal music education. This never discouraged me! During breaks when other children were playing, I'd sneak into the school hall to experiment with the old, out-of-tune piano.

The principal and administrative staff, whose offices were nearby, would shout at me to stop making noise. I'd hide behind the huge hall curtains until they left, then resume playing right where I'd left off!

By my teenage years, the music bug had truly taken hold. I could not only play piano but also teach it and even help run choir rehearsals. That passion for music has NEVER left me since those early days of discovery and determination.



Being blind from birth, how has that shaped the way you experience and create music?



For me, everything has been about the four remaining senses that still works. Lol. So when it comes to music, I'm more reliant on listening, and obviously feeling, meaning reading the room, instead of reading the music score. There were many occasions where I had to go and perform, and I did not know the music. The organizers or the Artists would then ask me if they can present me with a music chart or music score of the performance. I then would have to tell them that sending me audios of the music would work much better.

So obviously, some people would prefer someone who can cite read, and others are more open to somebody who is more flexible like me. Either way, making music as someone who has been blind from birth has been nothing but fun.

I feel as if I am also an ambassador for people with disabilities, more specifically people living with blindness. Because it would be more an awareness session than it would actually be a music session. There is such a lot that people want to know about my world as a blind person, and I am incredibly happy to educate and to make people aware.

The greatest part for me though, and I posted this on my Facebook some time ago, is that people do not know me as Bra Tee, the blind musician. They recognise me as Bra Tee, the excellent musician, music teacher, producer, and radio presenter, who also happens to be blind. My work is the loudest speaker, then my disability.



You're well known as a presenter and a powerful conversationalist - how does that side of you influence your music and performances?

TN

Radio has always been something close to my heart, from the days I was still staying with my mom's family, and I'd want to break open the radio, just so I could climb inside, and be with the people that are talking in there, till when I was older and more mature, listening to my favourite talk-show hosts, and wishing that I could one day run one. Funny enough, people keep on commending my voice, saying that I should be on radio. I kind of agree with them, the more I get to hear my own voice!! Hahahaha.

But radio also allows me to interview up and coming artists, as well as season pros within the industry. So, for me, it's all about the relationships I get to create and form part of, and the networking opportunities. Gold right there!



MG What made you choose the Nord keyboard, and what do you love most about playing it?

TN For the almost 25 years of being a musician, I have never come across a better keyboard than the Nord keyboard, ESPECIALLY their Stage range. I have found that with many other keyboards, they are so complex when it comes to navigating. Everything is buried inside menus. And nowadays, it's all about touch-screen interfaces, a blind person's absolute nightmare!!

With the Nord boards, all the knobs, buttons and faders are on the keyboard itself, and easily accessible, I have found. And the patches and samples of Nord are so genuine, so real, so natural! For instance, the piano patches feels and sounds like actual acoustic pianos, and NO other brand comes even close!! And layering is so easy as well!! Obviously, no keyboard is blind-friendly as yet. There is a lot that still needs to be done.

But NORD must be the better accessible brand, hands down!

MG What does your typical setup look like when performing or practicing?

TN My typical setup is straightforward. When I'm playing keys in church, I usually have my Nord Stage 3 as the main keyboard. It is a great instrument that gives me all the sounds and flexibility I need for worship songs and hymns.

In terms of monitoring, I use an in-ear system which helps me focus on my playing and hear the mix clearly. It is super helpful for staying in tune and playing confidently.

For communication with the team and sound engineer, I also use a Talk-Back mic. This lets me stay in touch with the sound booth and get feedback or instructions without having to leave my position on stage. It is a handy tool for keeping everything running smoothly during services.

MG You've said your talents are part of God's purpose for your life - how does your faith influence your music and creative journey?

TN My faith is a huge part of who I am, and it influences my music and creative journey. My talents are a gift from God, and that He has a purpose for me to use them to worship and serve others.

When I'm creating music or playing keys, I try to approach it with a sense of humility and gratitude, recognizing that these gifts are from God. I pray that my music would reflect God's love and character, and that it would bring joy and comfort to those who hear it.

My faith also gives me a sense of direction and purpose. I try to be mindful of the message and themes in the music I create and play, and to use my platform to share hope and encouragement with others. Ultimately, I want my music to be a form of worship, and to bring glory to God.

MG presents **What does success mean to you, and how do you stay motivated through challenges?**

TN To me, success comes in many ways really. Some bigger than others, and some real petty. For instance, when I have taught someone something new, and they understood the concepts, I count that as success. Also, when somebody meets me in the streets or in the mall, give me a massive hug, and thank me for a particular occasion I played at. The small slight differences that my craft makes, wherever I go.



It is far better than monetary success. It is more personal, warmer' just like the notes I play! As for challenges, they ALWAYS find a way of rocking up and making me feel like the world is ending.

But by the mere fact that I'm still alive, I always know that better days are coming. I will not lie and say that I am ALWAYS motivated. I do hit serious lows at sometimes. But it is always then about tapping back into what had worked for me.

Also just little things such as going to a good trusted friend, just to vent, or sitting in front of my piano, and find myself composing new music, or heading to my favourite steakhouse, or most importantly, consulting God, the best ever therapist in the Universe. Challenges are there to be overcome, so whenever a new one presents itself, I know it is conquering time again!



Looking ahead, what are your dreams or goals for the future - musically and personally?

TN

Looking ahead, I am excited about the future and the opportunities that lie ahead. Musically, my dream is to make a lasting impact on the industry, both nationally and internationally, as a top musician and producer. I am enthusiastic about pushing boundaries and inspiring others, and I am determined to show the world what it means to be a blind musician thriving in the industry.

One of my long-term goals is to establish a successful music academy with branches all over South Africa by 2035. I envision this academy as a place where I can share my knowledge, skills, and passion for music with the next generation of musicians.

In the shorter term, I am focusing on creating new music and releasing an album next year that features collaborations with top musicians in the industry. I am really looking forward to collaborating with other talented artists and bringing new sounds to life.

On a personal level, I'm hoping to upgrade my musical gear and finally get the tools I need to take my craft to the next level. No more battered old keyboard for me! I'm also excited about exploring a career in radio broadcasting, which I'm really passionate about. I love the idea of sharing my passion for music with a wider audience and connecting with people through the airwaves.

Overall, I'm driven by a desire to make a meaningful impact through my music and to inspire others with my story.

I'm excited to see what the future holds and how God will use me to achieve my dreams.



"People do not know me as Bra Tee, the blind musician. They recognise me as Bra Tee, the excellent musician, music teacher, producer, and radio presenter, who also happens to be blind. My work is the loudest speaker, then my disability."





HISTORIC REISSUES

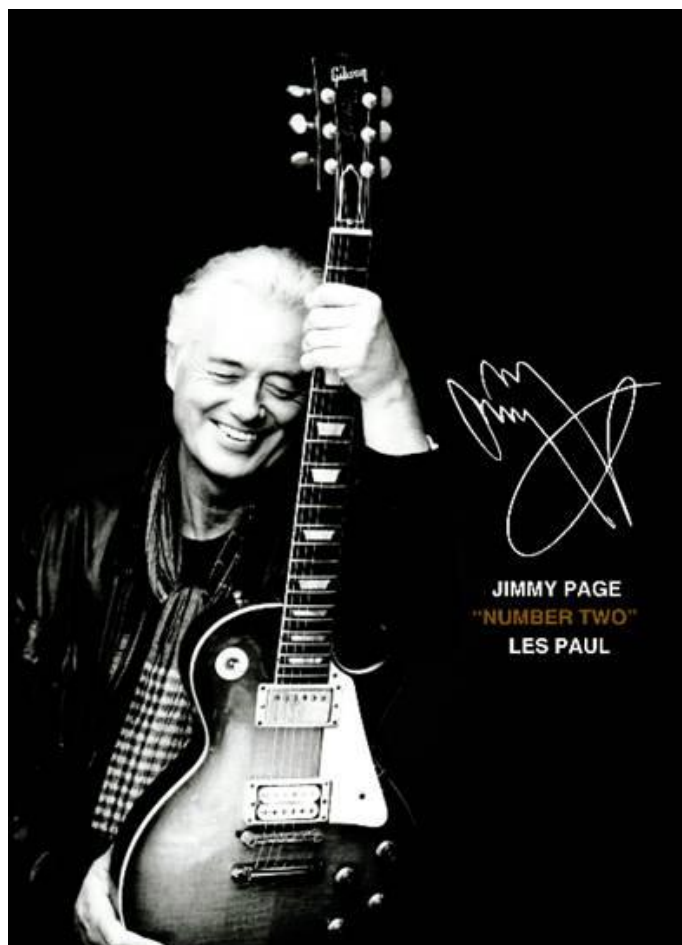
The Story Behind Gibson's Most Iconic Models

What is a Reissue?

In the world of guitars, a "reissue" refers to a modern-day recreation of a classic, vintage model. These guitars are crafted to closely match the specifications, materials, and designs of the originals, giving players the opportunity to experience the sound, feel, and aesthetics of iconic instruments without having to track down a rare, vintage piece. Reissues bring the magic of history into the hands of modern players, blending the legacy of the past with the innovations of today.

Gibson's historic reissue guitars are more than just beautiful instruments—they are time machines, meticulously recreating some of the most iconic designs and tones ever made.

These reissues capture the spirit of the original models while bringing them to a new generation of players. Let's dive into the stories behind Gibson's most legendary reissues and what makes them special.



The 1959 Les Paul Standard Reissue

The 1959 Les Paul Standard is often referred to as the “Holy Grail” of electric guitars, a model that defined an era of rock and blues music. Originally released with a stunning flame maple top, PAF humbuckers, and impeccable craftsmanship, it quickly became a favorite among guitar legends.

Jimmy Page used it to craft the sound of Led Zeppelin, Slash made it an icon for Guns N' Roses fans, and Joe Perry of Aerosmith delivered soaring solos with it. The reissue faithfully captures every detail of this masterpiece, from the precise neck profile to the hand-wound pickups, giving players the chance to own a piece of history.



The 1961 SG Standard Reissue

A bold departure from Gibson's traditional designs, the SG (Solid Guitar) launched in 1961 with a sleek, lightweight body and a devilish double-cutaway shape.

It quickly became a favorite for hard rock and heavy blues players, with Angus Young of AC/DC wielding it like a weapon on stage, while Tony Iommi of Black Sabbath used it to define the sound of heavy metal.

The reissue preserves the fast, thin neck and aggressive bite of the original, offering the same energy and iconic look.





The 1958 Explorer Reissue

When the Explorer first appeared in 1958, its futuristic, angular design was ahead of its time. Originally a commercial failure, it later became a symbol of heavy rock and metal, embraced by legends like James Hetfield of Metallica, The Edge of U2, and Allen Collins of Lynyrd Skynyrd.

The reissue is built to the exact specifications of the original, complete with a Korina wood body and powerful humbuckers, making it a must-have for players who want to stand out in both look and sound.



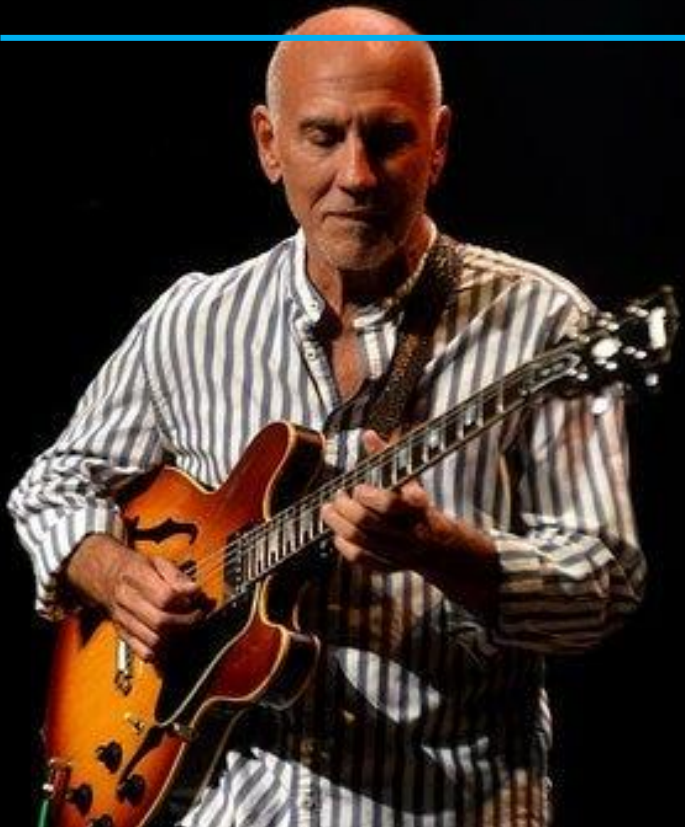


The 1964 ES-335 Reissue

The ES-335 is a true classic, beloved for its warm, rich, and resonant tones. As a semi-hollow guitar, it offers a perfect blend of the sustain of a solid body with the airy, organic feel of an acoustic.

Blues legend B.B. King made it famous with his beloved "Lucille," while Eric Clapton and Larry Carlton explored its smooth, expressive range. The 1964 reissue is carefully aged in the Murphy Lab, featuring a Bigsby tremolo and all the tonal beauty of the original.





Why These Reissues Matter?

Gibson's historic reissues offer players a chance to own a piece of history, blending vintage style with modern craftsmanship. They are a testament to the timeless appeal of Gibson's designs and the passion of players who keep them alive.

Each model is more than just an instrument—it is a connection to the legends who shaped the sound of modern music.

Ready to step back in time?

Gibson®

LPSTAA01-CX

LES PAUL STUDIO SESSION

Every guitarist needs that one instrument that bridges the gap between inspiration and execution.

The Gibson Les Paul Studio Session in Cobalt Burst is exactly that—designed not just to look iconic, but to work hard behind the scenes.

Whether you're tracking layers in a pro studio or crafting your sound in a bedroom setup, this is the Les Paul that adapts to the moment, every time.

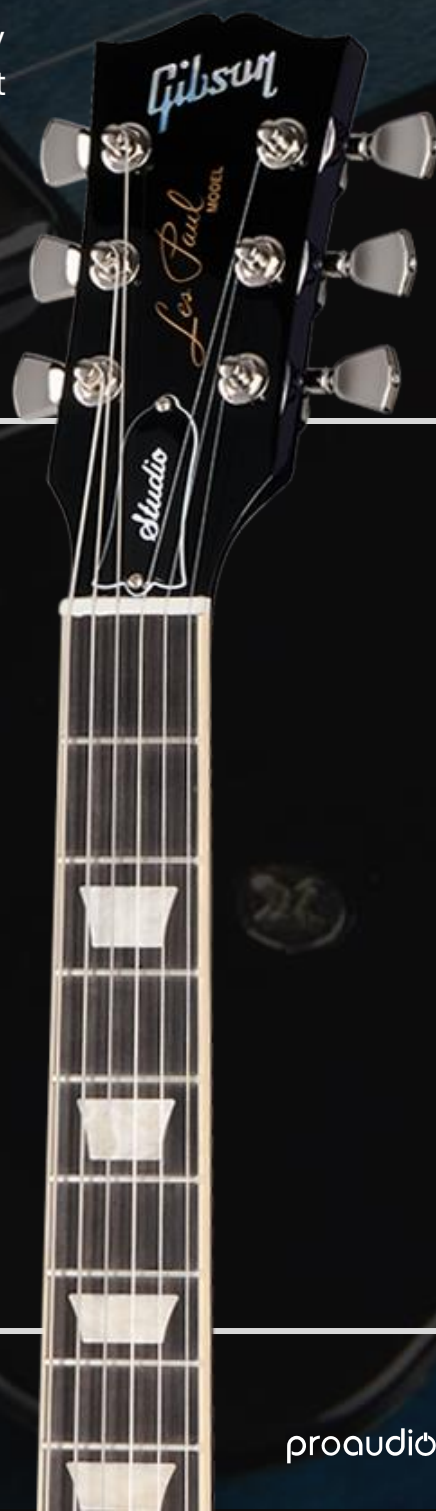


WHY IT'S WORTH IT

From its gorgeous Cobalt Burst finish to its studio-grade flexibility, this guitar is made for musicians who want more than just vintage tone. It's packed with practical features that unlock new tonal spaces without overwhelming your workflow. Clean one minute, gritty the next, or straight into your amp with no colouring at all—this Les Paul lets you decide.

WHAT KIND OF MUSIC IS IT GOOD FOR?

There's no genre this Les Paul can't handle. Blues, rock, soul, funk, fusion, gospel, pop, indie—it's all there. The '57 Classics bring that rich, vintage growl, while the coil-splitting and phase switching expand the palette into clean, chimey, or experimental territory. It's a session player's dream but built tough enough for the road. Whether you're layering lush tones, riffing on stage, or shaping your next breakthrough sound, the Gibson Les Paul Studio Session is ready when you are.





You're not just buying a guitar;
you're investing in a versatile partner
that moves with your music.





“The Studio Session isn’t just a guitar—it’s a conversation between tradition and innovation.

It gives you every tone you’ve ever chased, and a few you didn’t know you needed.”

AEROBAND

Big Sound Without the Big Setup

Music tech is evolving at lightning speed, *AeroBand* is changing the game for drummers and producers alike. Imagine playing a full drum kit—with sticks and foot sensors—but with zero noise, no bulky gear, and the freedom to jam anywhere. That's the AeroBand promise: *powerful performance in the palm of your hand.*





AeroBand's innovative air drumming system uses **motion-sensing technology** to replicate real drumming. With just a pair of **Bluetooth-connected smart sticks** and foot sensors, players can tap into a rich library of high-quality drum sounds and grooves. Whether you're in a small apartment, on the go, or just want to practise without disturbing anyone—AeroBand has you covered.





The companion AeroBand App opens up even more versatility. Choose from a range of kits, customise your sound, or switch to game mode for fun, interactive learning. It's perfect for beginners building rhythm skills, students refining their technique, or professionals looking for a portable practice solution.





And don't let the minimal setup fool you—this system packs surprising responsiveness and dynamic range. It captures every movement with accuracy, translating air strikes into real beats with satisfying realism. Whether you're grooving in your room or laying down a virtual track, AeroBand is ready to go wherever you are.

“Drumming without limits. AeroBand is compact, intuitive, and incredibly fun—no pads, no pedals, just pure freedom.”

For music creators looking to cut down on clutter without sacrificing creativity, the AeroBand is more than a gadget—it's a revolution.

START YOUR JOURNEY TO BECOMING A ROCKSTAR!

SCHOOL
OF ROCK



From Lesson to Live Show

The Sound of Progress at School of Rock

At School of Rock Parktown North, music education goes far beyond theory and technique—it's about helping students grow into confident performers, ready to take the stage and make their mark.

Over the course of just three months, students work closely with professional instructors to master songs, sharpen their skills, and build the courage to perform in front of a live audience.

Two students who've embraced this journey with passion are Ayla Gelbart and Mike Freer. Their experiences show how powerful a great music program can be when it meets the energy of determined young musicians.

Meet Mike Freer

"I'm Mike, and here's a bit about my journey with music so far."

1. What instrument are you learning?

Acoustic guitar.

2. What song do you really want to learn how to play?

Paint It Black, Wild Horses, or any Rolling Stones numbers.

3. What is your favourite part about School of Rock?

Learning with my instructor, Ryan.

4. Who is your favourite musician or band, and why do you like their music?

The Rolling Stones—mainly because they have a great mix of blues and rock and roll. They're the greatest rock and roll band in the world.

5. What is the most fun or exciting thing you've learned while playing your instrument?

I've always been able to play chords, but learning barre chords has been my best experience.

Meet Ayla Gelbart

"I'm Ayla Gelbart, and I'm really looking forward to sharing a bit about myself!"

1. What instrument are you learning?

I play drums.

2. What song do you really want to learn how to play?

It's an absolute must-play song: *Tom Sawyer* by Rush.

3. What is your favourite part about School of Rock?

Learning from and playing with the most talented musicians around. I love being challenged, so it's always a treat when I come in and there's something new to learn.

4. Who is your favourite musician or band, and why do you like their music?

My favorite musicians vary pretty much every day, but I'll tell you that my favorite band right now is *Paramore*. They are all such incredible musicians, obviously, but the reason I love them so much is because I've listened to them for as long as I can remember—so their music kind of feels like part of me in a way.

5. What is the most fun or exciting thing you've learned while playing your instrument?

How confident I become. It's very strange because I used to have really bad stage fright when I was younger—and I still do sometimes—but with drums, I only want to get on stage!



Anna Savage

Strings, Style & Soul

AN EMERGING VOICE

with a bluesy edge and a passion for real, relatable music

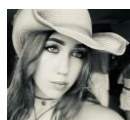
Meet **Anna Savage**, a Cape Town-based singer, guitarist, and songwriter whose musical journey is as authentic as her sound. A graduate of the School of Rock and now a student at the Cape Town Creative Academy, Anna blends raw talent with refined expression.

From her early days singing to discovering a deep love for the guitar, she's developed a blues-inspired style that's rich in emotion and grounded in simplicity. Whether performing solo or collaborating with fellow musicians, Anna is carving out a space in the local scene with her heartfelt lyrics, soulful tone, and unmistakable stage presence.

In this exclusive interview, we get to know the artist behind the music—and what lies ahead for her unique journey.



You have been studying at School of Rock, what have you studied?

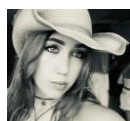


I was at School of Rock last year, and I was unfortunately only there for about two years, but I'd definitely say it was the best two years I have ever had. It provided me with so many great opportunities and experiences, as well as making friends within music I will have forever.

At School of Rock I started out just singing—this was in 2023. My love of music led to me picking up the guitar, which from there just skyrocketed into a fixated obsession. I began in 2024 playing guitar and singing in house band. I would love to continue studying music, but for now I am doing a degree in graphic design and illustration at the Cape Town Creative Academy.



You are seen rocking an epic Epiphone on stage, what's your fav model?



I absolutely love Epiphone—I think they are great guitars and their playability is impeccable. I was lent the Flying V from Proaudio and I love that guitar; it's an awesome shape and handles heavy music well—a super fun instrument on stage. My favorite Epiphone, however, is my Les Paul. That guitar is amazing—it's smooth and has great sounds. It's always my go-to and what is really comfortable.

MG **Your sound is quite distinct – how would you describe your musical style, and what elements do you focus on when creating your songs?**

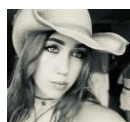


Working on a unique sound today is difficult due to the music industry being so full.

As much as I'd love to play heavy metal, it's just not the sound that does well today. My sound, if I could describe it, is definitely on the bluesy side. I take quality over quantity seriously—I think a simple riff or progression with a memorable sound is more impactful to a listener than a complex line or solo.

I prefer to focus on more melodically pleasing factors and sounds that are satisfying and work well. Guitar reverb and chorus sounds are my best friends—any original music I like to keep it clean.

MG **Are you currently part of a band, or are you pursuing a solo path? What led to that choice?**

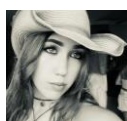


I am not in a band at the moment. I do have a group of people who I was in house band with last year that I jam with occasionally.

However, I'd like to focus on being a solo artist. Being in a band, I find, can be tough when people have conflicting ideas. As a solo artist, I can really channel my exclusive sound and what message I want to communicate through my music.



MG **What are your goals for the near future when it comes to your music? Are there any upcoming releases fans should look out for?**



For the future, I aim to put out music. I have a plan to release an EP of 5 songs—maybe more.

I need to finish writing a few songs and have them recorded, but music releases are a solid yes for the future. For future releases, I also aim to make music that is real and relatable—songs that people can listen to and think “I feel the same way” or “I have felt like this before.” I just find it creates a more personal connection between the music and the listener.



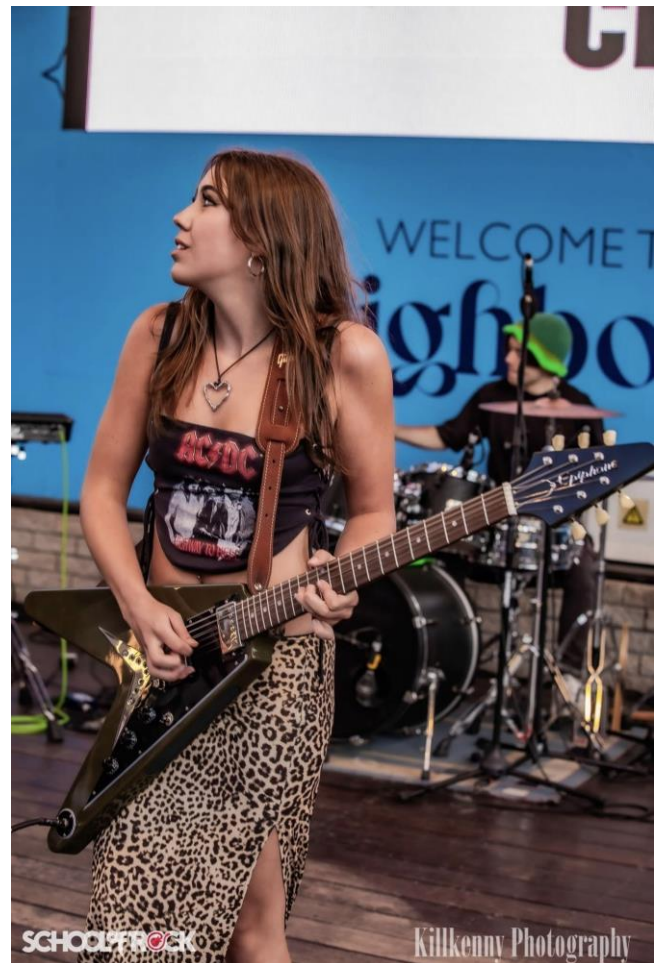
Who are the artists that have most inspired your journey, both musically and personally, and how have they influenced your playing or songwriting?



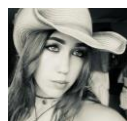
I am greatly inspired by Jimmy Page of Led Zeppelin. He is the reason I picked up a guitar in the first place. It's a funny story actually—I remember seeing a video of him playing live at Madison Square Garden back in '73 and wanting to be able to play like that. I had a beat-up classical guitar under my bed which I dug out and started messing around on.

I remember my dad told me that if I could learn *Stairway to Heaven* properly, he would buy me an electric guitar—and from that point it just became an obsession. My first guitar was a Squier Stratocaster which we found on Facebook Marketplace—it came with a tiny Peavey amp that made some questionable noises. I still have the guitar and the amp and I still use them occasionally.

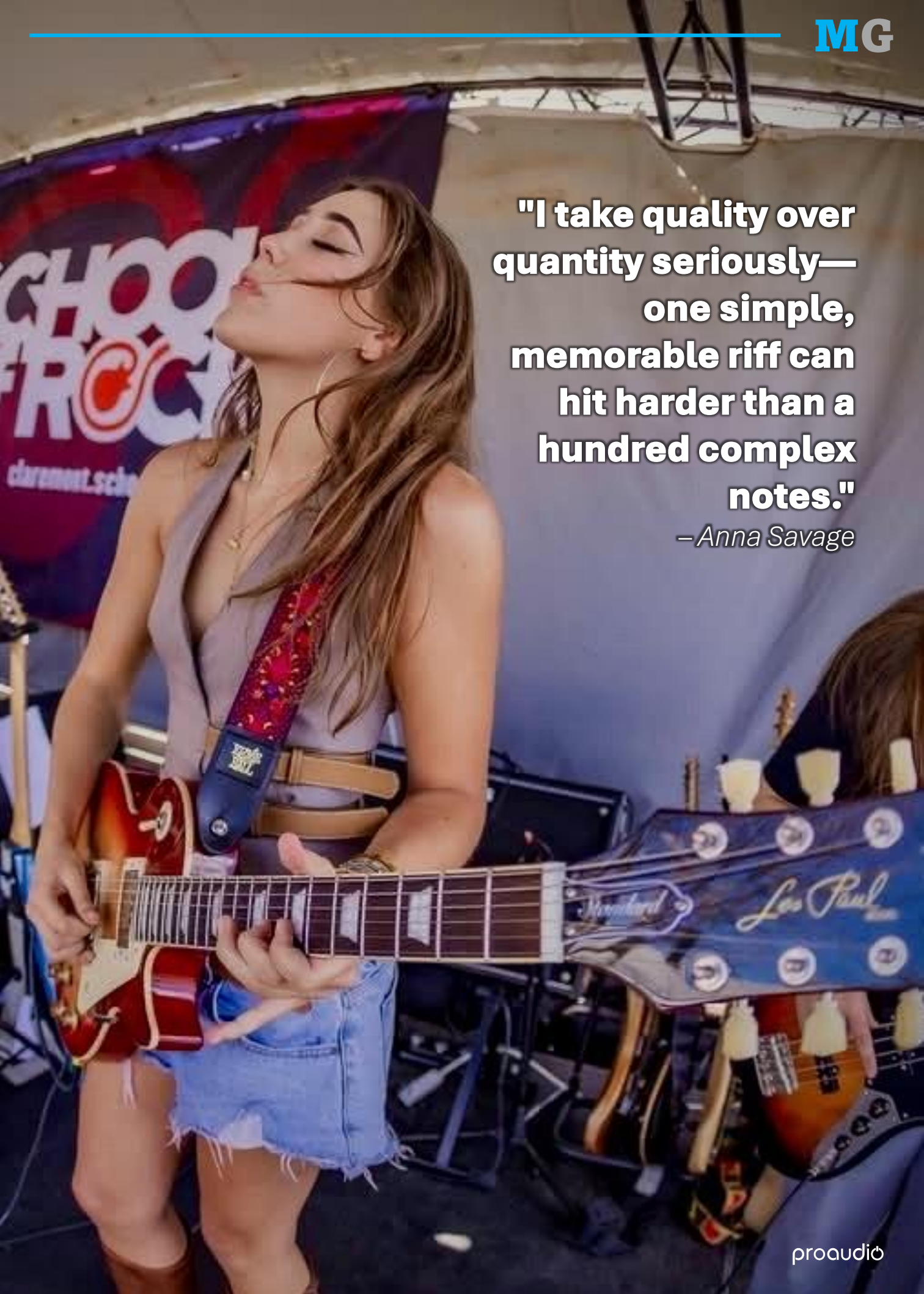
Jimmy Page's style not only inspired me to play guitar but it inspired my bluesy style. Musically and vocally, I am a big fan of Billie Eilish, Norah Jones, and Phoebe Bridgers. I get a lot of song style inspiration from them.



We heard you recently received a Gibson Les Paul for your birthday – which model did you get, and how has it impacted your playing or performances?



While the specific model wasn't mentioned, my Les Paul (Epiphone) is honestly my favorite guitar to play. It's smooth, reliable, and has great tone—really comfortable and always my go-to. I absolutely love how it plays and feels, both in rehearsals and on stage. It's a gift that's definitely deepened my connection to music.



"I take quality over quantity seriously— one simple, memorable riff can hit harder than a hundred complex notes."

— Anna Savage

FROM GARAGE TO STAGE

Best Epiphone Models for
Up-and-Coming Guitarists

Epiphone has long been known as the brand that brings legendary Gibson tones and designs within reach of aspiring musicians.

But with so many models available, which ones are truly best for the up-and-coming guitarist looking to go from the garage to the stage? Whether you're a beginner finding your sound or a player ready to perform, here are the top Epiphone models that deliver big on tone, style, and value.

Epiphone Les Paul Custom

Why It's Great: A true classic with its iconic black finish, gold hardware, and creamy humbuckers. The Les Paul Custom offers a thick, rich tone perfect for rock, blues, and jazz. With a mahogany body and a smooth-playing neck, it's as much a visual statement as it is a sonic powerhouse. The Custom model also features multi-ply binding, adding to its premium feel.

Perfect For: Rock, blues, and anything that needs rich, full-bodied tone.

Epiphone SG Standard

Why It's Great: Lightweight and aggressive, the SG Standard is built for high-energy playing. Its dual humbuckers deliver a roaring tone, while the slim taper neck offers incredible speed. It's perfect for fast riffs and solos, making it a go-to for rock, punk, and metal.

Perfect For: Classic rock, punk, and metal.



Epiphone ES-335

Why It's Great: A semi-hollow classic known for its warm, rounded tones. The ES-335 offers a versatile sound palette, from smooth jazz cleans to gritty blues overdrive. Its dual humbuckers and semi-hollow body give it a unique, resonant character that suits a variety of genres.

Perfect For: Blues, jazz, indie, and alternative.

Epiphone Explorer

Why It's Great: With its iconic, angular shape and aggressive tone, the Explorer is a statement guitar. Powerful humbuckers and a fast-playing neck make it perfect for hard rock and metal, while its futuristic design ensures you'll stand out on stage.

Perfect For: Hard rock, heavy metal, and shredding.



Epiphone Casino

Why It's Great: Famous for its P-90 pickups, the Casino delivers vintage sparkle, clarity, and a touch of grit. Its fully hollow body makes it lightweight, while the pickups give it a bright, punchy sound that cuts through any mix.

Perfect For: Blues, indie rock, and classic rock.

5



Affordable Tone Upgrades

Swap pickups for even better sound.
Add locking tuners for better tuning stability.
Experiment with different string gauges for
your style.

These Epiphone models offer pro-level
sound without the pro-level price tag.
Ready to find your voice?





MUSA ZWANE

Skating into Sound - The Evolution of Musa Zwane

In the heart of Soweto, where the streets pulse with culture, resilience, and rhythm, a young creative named Musa Zwane carved a unique path—first on a skateboard, then through the strings of a guitar. From his early days navigating the shadows of gangsterism to headlining iconic stages like AFROPUNK, Musa's story is one of transformation, self-discovery, and bold soundscapes that defy convention.

In this exclusive interview with *MusicGear Magazine*, Musa opens up about the people, passions, and gear that shaped his music and identity.



Growing up in Soweto clearly shaped your journey — how did your environment influence your early relationship with music?



Growing up in Soweto made the journey challenging because I always had a different taste in almost everything. Among my childhood friends, I was fascinated by live music, but access to it was limited. There weren't many mentors or examples to look up to in that space. Choices were few, so I had to carve my own way. Through my unusual but authentic tastes, I slowly connected with people who gave me a chance and didn't judge me for being different.



You've spoken about being surrounded by gangsterism before finding your way through creativity — how did you make that shift, and what role did music and skating play in that transformation?



In the hood, we didn't have many after-school programs or activities, so we often hung out with older kids and were influenced by their stories—often crime-related. I wasn't into soccer, which left me vulnerable to falling into bad company. Eventually, I saw my friends dying or going to jail, and I knew I had to change. That's when I found this group of “wannabe American culture skater kids.”



I started hanging out with them, first as a buyer (they always had the best strains), then gradually joining in. Two weeks later, I could pop an ollie, and that was the start. They donated gear, and I got into skating. On Fridays, they'd bring guitars and have jam sessions. That's when I first touched a guitar—within the first day, I could play three chords. Eventually, I formed a band with a good friend, Bafana, who gave me a Boss distortion pedal and introduced me to the electric guitar. We called our band *Death at a Party*.



MG Skating seems to have been a huge turning point in your life.

Can you tell us more about how the Soweto Skate Society (SSS) helped redirect your path?



Meeting the SSS changed my life. We started attending skate comps and performances, which made me take life seriously. Leaving the typical Soweto lifestyle wasn't easy—I became the “crazy one” walking around Block A with a guitar. Mentally, it was tough. I went through a breakdown because I had become what I once criticized. But SSS gave me courage, strength, and brotherhood. The love and support were unbelievable. They got me on stage for the first time, helped me win my first skate comp, and gave me confidence. My mom also played a huge role—she hired me in her construction company, and I used the money to buy my first guitar: an Ibanez 7-string, perfect for my heavy metal obsession.



MG The triple “S” on your guitar is a tribute to the Soweto Skate Society — why is that chapter of your life so significant to your identity as an artist today?



Skating was the bridge to music—it introduced me to musicians and helped me believe in myself. That support made me grow. I met Sandile Mbatha, my best friend and bassist, and Hugh Davison, who pushed me to produce and helped me set up a home studio. We formed *BL4NKG4L4XY* together. That era made me who I am, and I'm deeply grateful.

MG You're self-taught on the guitar and only recently started formal theory studies. What challenges — and freedoms — come with learning to play without traditional training?



Learning by ear was powerful— it gave me a unique tone and helped me develop a signature sound. I became the “If you can hum it, I can play it” type of guy. But theory added language—it helped me understand the magic I was already doing. Now, I can read transcriptions and collaborate more easily with other musicians.



Let's talk gear: you often bring your old Epiphone and Gibson guitars to gigs — what do these instruments mean to you, and what kind of sound do they help you create?



The Gibson changed everything. I got it during lockdown when Hugh gave me his old Mac, an interface, and the Gibson itself. That guitar gave me a deeper, fatter tone—what I'd always chased. Later, I convinced Hugh to sell it to me. The Epiphone came from Julian Van Plato of DiscovrTV, who endorsed me and has been a great mentor. These guitars are like hybrids—they give me treble and that fat, heavy tone I love.



From “Death at a Party” to “Hidden Commandment” and now “One Day Is One Day” — how has your sound evolved across all the bands you've been part of?



Over the years, I've played with many bands—even bass for *Sun XA* on a project. But meeting *Shameless* is when I truly owned my identity as *The Don of Soweto Rock Guitar*. My sound matured. I now aim to fuse traditional Zulu guitar styles with heavy metal. My mother's love for meaningful music also influenced me, and I'm exploring more every day.



You've performed at iconic venues like Zone 6 and festivals like the French Festival and Soweto Music Festival — which performance stands out the most, and why?



AFROPUNK 2019 stands out. Performing with *Shameless Band SA* and *TCIYF* in front of a huge crowd—especially kids—was surreal. To be a young Black rock guitarist on that stage, after being the kid walking around Block A with a guitar, was full circle. Now it's weird *not* to see me with a guitar in the park! I want to help the next generation with guitars and skating.



How has working with diverse collectives like Decisively Diverse Productions, Ice Cream Shop, and Sakhula Afrofusion shaped your musical identity?



I already had a sense of who I was musically, but I wasn't fully owning it. Collaborating with these collectives reminded me that I'm not just a genre or a band—I'm *Musa Zwane Music*. I'm a soundscaped human who loves to explore. When people give me the space, I always leave a mark.



What's next for Musa Zwane? Any plans for a solo project, new collaborations, or maybe even a debut album?



I'm diving into lots of collaborations. *BL4NKG4L4XY* is dropping singles and music videos soon. I just started working with *GANGA JAJI*, a GQOM rock duo—very exciting stuff. Also collaborating closely with photographer Frank Marshall, who always captures my essence perfectly. Big things are coming.





MAESTRO IS BACK

And They're Making Noise Worth Hearing

There are some names in music history that never really disappear — they just wait for the right moment to return. And when **Maestro** decided it was time to make noise again, they didn't come quietly. They came with a full-blown stompbox lineup that merges the warmth of vintage tone with the flexibility today's players demand. It's not just a reboot — it's a full revival of everything that made the name legendary, and then some.

This isn't a brand trying to chase a trend. It's a brand that helped shape the very idea of guitar tone as we know it. Back in the day, Maestro was behind the first commercially successful fuzz pedal, immortalized by Keith Richards on "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction." That same spirit is now baked into a new collection of pedals that feel like they were pulled from a 1970s dream and retooled for modern pedalboards.

And here's the thing: these aren't just reissues. Sure, there's the soul of vintage analog circuits coursing through every one of them, but Maestro went further — adding modes, switching options, tone-shaping tools, and even internal tweaks that make these pedals as gig-ready as anything out there.

They look fantastic too, housed in sleek enclosures with throwback knobs and glowing LED symbols that light up like sonic beacons on a dark stage.

Plug into the fuzz and you'll instantly get what all the fuss is about. It's thick, raw, and unapologetically expressive — a fuzz that roars like it remembers the golden age of rock but still speaks the language of now.

Stack that into their distortion or overdrive and you're sculpting a wall of tone that can range from bluesy warmth to searing modern grit.

There's a gate feature tucked into the distortion that tightens up your playing like a razor's edge — especially useful when you're hitting high-gain chaos and need that professional finish.

But Maestro didn't stop at dirt. They brought the whole modulation family to the party. Their delay doesn't just repeat your notes — it wraps them in a warm analog embrace that sounds like old tape echo memories relived.

Subtle modulation? It's there, hidden in a trim pot if you want it.





Their chorus shimmers like it was bottled straight from an '80s studio, but with a modern twist that gives you either classic sparkle or orbiting multi-dimensional motion. And then there's the phaser — smooth, rich, and just the right amount of swirl, whether you're channeling Hendrix or diving into ambient shoegaze layers.



Want more movement?

Hit the tremolo and feel it pulse under your fingers, whether you prefer the gentle push and pull of traditional amp trem or the more harmonic, almost phaser-like shimmer that dances in stereo. And if funk is your flavour, wait until you step on the envelope filter. It's snappy, sensitive, and makes your guitar talk back in all the right ways.



Of course, every great rig needs a strong foundation, and Maestro made sure to include that too. The compressor sustainer brings just the right balance of squish and sparkle, making rhythm playing pop and solos sing without losing dynamics.



And when it's time to push your amp or punch through the mix, their boost pedal is like a secret weapon — transparent when you want it, aggressive when you need it, and smart enough to clean up your lows or tighten your mids depending on how you dial it in.



What's beautiful about this entire collection is how it plays together.

These aren't just standalone pedals — they're a family. Stack the fuzz into the boost, chase it into the delay, finish with chorus and tremolo... and suddenly, you're not just playing your guitar anymore — you're telling stories with it.

Maestro hasn't just built pedals. They've built a toolkit for tone builders, a playground for sonic explorers, and a love letter to guitarists who still believe that sound matters. In a world full of digital modeling and preset packs, there's something refreshing — almost rebellious — about a collection of analog pedals that just sound *right*.

Whether you're stepping on stage, stepping into the studio, or just stepping into the world of pedals for the first time, you owe it to yourself to plug into a piece of history — one that's been reborn for today's generation.

Maestro is back.

And this time, they brought the whole band.





Introducing the Blackstar Unity Series Bass Amplification Redefined

Blackstar Amplification, founded by a group of experienced amp designers in 2007, quickly earned a reputation for pushing boundaries in guitar tone and performance. Known for their innovation and versatility, Blackstar has long been a go-to name for guitarists seeking more than just standard sound.

With the introduction of the Unity Series, Blackstar now turns its attention to the world of bass amplification—offering something fresh, flexible, and powerful for bass players everywhere.

The Unity Concept

The Unity Series isn't just another bass amp range—it's a complete rethink of what bass amplification should be.

Developed from scratch by bassists for bassists, these amps are designed to deliver incredible tone with simplicity and adaptability. Whether you're practicing at home, recording in the studio, or performing on stage, the Unity amps provide consistent, pro-level performance.

Tone Shaping Like Never Before

The Unity Series is all about control and character. Each amp comes with:

- **Three Preamp Voices** – Classic (warm and vintage), Modern (clean and punchy), and Flat (transparent and natural), giving you instant access to different tonal flavors.
- **Response Control** – Unique to Blackstar, this feature lets you choose between three classic power amp types: Linear, 6L6, and 6550. Each shapes the dynamics and feel of your sound for tailored response and compression.
- **Built-in Effects** – Onboard compression, chorus, and sub-octave effects allow you to add depth, thickness, and shimmer to your tone—without needing external pedals.



Designed for Any Situation

Blackstar understands that bassists play in a variety of contexts, and the Unity Series reflects that.

The range includes:



Unity 30 – A 30W combo with an 8" speaker, perfect for quiet practice.



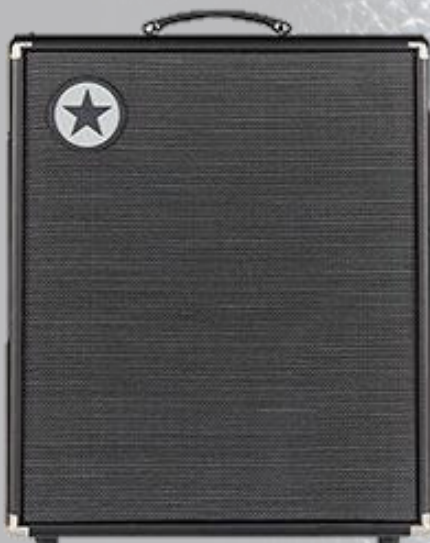
Unity 60 – A 60W combo with a 10" speaker, ideal for rehearsals.



Unity 120 – A 120W combo with a 12" speaker, delivering gig-ready punch.



Unity 250 – A 250W combo with a 15" speaker, for those needing solid low-end in larger spaces.



Unity 500 – A powerful 500W combo with dual 10" speakers, built for pro-stage performance.

- 3 Voices – Classic, Modern, Flat
- 3 Footswitchable Drives with user controllable blend – Overdrive / Distortion / Fuzz
- 3-band EQ with semi-parametric Mid
- Unique Response control – Linear, 6L6 and 6550
- Footswitchable Chorus and Sub-Octave with adjustable level control

There's also the **Unity 250ACT**, a powered 250W 1x15" extension cabinet designed to expand your rig with ease and power.

Modern Connectivity

Every Unity amp is loaded with features for modern musicians: USB audio for recording, balanced XLR outputs for direct injection into PA systems, MP3/line inputs for jamming along, and headphone outs for silent practice. Whatever the context, Unity amps make sure you're always connected and in control.



MG

Lose Your Head...Again.

The Spirit is Back!

STEINBERGERTM

STATE OF THE INSTRUMENT.

A Part of Gibson Brands

Lightweight and Reliable

The Ultimate Travel GuitarTM

Headless and Virtually Indestructible

proaudio

HEADLESS, HASSLE-FREE, AND BUILT TO PLAY

Meet the Steinberger XT-25

The **Steinberger XT-25 Standard Outfit** isn't your average 5-string bass—it's a sleek, headless machine designed for players who want something different, practical, and seriously fun to play. Whether you're gigging on stage, recording in the studio, or just jamming at home, this bass delivers bold tone without the bulk or fuss.

The first thing you'll notice? **There's no headstock.** And that's no gimmick—it's a design revolution. By removing the headstock and using a **direct-pull tuning system** at the body end, the XT-25 offers **superior tuning stability, perfect balance, and zero neck dive.** It stays in tune better, sits more comfortably on your body, and is easier to carry, store, or travel with.

Go Headless!



The **5-string design** opens up your range with a low B string, perfect for heavier grooves, gospel runs, extended-range funk, or intricate studio work. The **maple body** provides clarity and punch, while the **bolt-on maple neck** and **rosewood fingerboard** give smooth, fast playability across all 24 frets.

This bass is powered by **Steinberger HB-1 humbucking pickups**, known for their tight low end, defined mids, and clean highs. Whether you're playing fingerstyle, slap, or pick, the XT-25 holds its ground in any mix—live or recorded.



Artists like **Tony Levin** (Peter Gabriel, King Crimson), **Leeland Sklar**, and **Mike Rutherford** (Genesis) have all used Steinberger instruments to break boundaries and reimagine what a bass can do. The XT-25 follows in that tradition: forward-thinking, reliable, and stylish.

So why should the XT-25 be on your radar?

- **No headstock = no neck dive or balance issues**
- **Travel-ready** – compact design fits easily into overhead bins or tight stage spaces
- **Versatile tone** – perfect for rock, funk, gospel, worship, and modern studio work
- **Distinct look** – you'll turn heads before you play your first note
- **Solid hardware** – locking bridge tuners and durable materials built for the long haul

If you're looking for a bass that dares to be different—but still rocks with tone, feel, and soul—the **Steinberger XT-25 is your next step forward.**





Thank You TREE63

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