Beyond “Air” Guitar

Follow this and additional works at: https://dsc.duq.edu/tempo

Part of the Music Education Commons, Music Practice Commons, and the Other Music Commons

Recommended Citation
(2012). Beyond “Air” Guitar. TEMPO, 10 (1). Retrieved from https://dsc.duq.edu/tempo/vol10/iss1/10

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Duquesne Scholarship Collection. It has been accepted for inclusion in TEMPO by an authorized editor of Duquesne Scholarship Collection.
Beyond “Air” Guitar
Long before games like Guitar Hero and Rock Band inspired a generation of Jimi Hendrix and Jimmy Page protégés, Joe Negri, Bill Purse, Mark Koch, Tom Kikta, John Malone and Jim Farquar—core faculty members in the Mary Pappert School of Music—founded the Guitar and Bass Workshop for aspiring musicians.

“We founded the workshop to help students of all ages become more familiar with the guitar programs at Duquesne University,” said Mark Koch, director of jazz guitar and workshop director. “The workshop also provides an opportunity for guitar enthusiasts to hone their riffs with seasoned music department faculty and famous guitar icons.”

Thirty percent of the students who are admitted to the University guitar program are already familiar with the department and its faculty because of their participation in this workshop.

“We’ve had students as young as 8 and as old as 85,” said Purse, professor of guitar and chair of the music technology department. “The experience and knowledge they gain by attending this workshop is unique and phenomenal.”

In addition to guitar and bass instruction and master classes, workshop offerings have grown to include electives on multi-track recording, the business of music, music therapy, performance development, music theory and guitar and bass synthesis, among others.

“Our knowledgeable and experienced faculty provide students with the information and the artistic proficiency needed for excellence in a performance career on guitar and bass,” Koch said. “Students have the opportunity to perform at our Participants’ Concert, interact with other musicians and learn from world-renowned recording artists.”

Over the past 25 years, music faculty members have forged lasting alliances with guitar manufacturers and music organizations, which in turn have provided workshop scholarships and/or clinicians.

“These partnerships between the music industry and educators maintain the workshop’s minimal tuition and assist students in developing a lifelong interest in music,” Koch said.

Past workshop clinicians, including Wolf Marshall, Carol Kaye, Jimmy Bruno, Henry Johnson and the late Bill Schultz, former president and CEO of Guitar World, have enhanced the educational experience of workshop participants.

“These partnerships between the music industry and educators maintain the workshop’s minimal tuition and assist students in developing a lifelong interest in music.”
of Fender Musical Instruments and Duquesne University alumnus, have all cited Duquesne's jazz guitar programs as some of the best in the country.

This past summer, workshop organizers decided to celebrate the 25th anniversary in true rock star fashion. The event included a premiere screening of the documentary *The Wrecking Crew*, valuable guitar raffles and a special “celebrity” guest.

Pittsburgh Steelers’ Defensive Coordinator and guitar enthusiast Dick LeBeau was presented with the Duquesne University Local Guitar Legend Achievement Award in conjunction with the workshop in July. “We have been presenting this award every year to people in Pittsburgh who have made an impact on guitar and music,” Purse said. “When I found out that Dick LeBeau actually keeps a guitar in his office over at Heinz Field and that he plays it all the time, the choice was easy.”

Due to his busy schedule, LeBeau was unable to accept the award in person during the workshop. Instead, LeBeau visited campus the prior week to receive the award and record a video acceptance speech. During his visit, LeBeau took some time to jam with Purse.

“To be given this award is a great honor for me,” LeBeau said. “I’m certainly a football coach by vocation and a guitar player by avocation. Playing guitar has been a large part of my life—mostly solace seeking. I think we all need that.”

LeBeau said he was around 8 years old when he started to experiment with his cousin’s ukulele—from there he began playing the bass “uke” before buying his first six-string guitar when he was in college.

“Some say that my job is fairly stressful. I would be inclined to agree with that,” LeBeau joked. “Some evenings—some Sunday evenings—when everyone in town is saying ‘How could you be that stupid?’ my guitar always says, ‘Hey, c’mon over here. I want to talk to you for a minute—you’re not so bad.’”

The workshop included a premiere screening of the documentary *The Wrecking Crew*, valuable guitar raffles and a special “celebrity” guest.
“When I found out that Dick LeBeau actually keeps a guitar in his office over at Heinz Field and that he plays it all the time, the choice was easy.”

“I’m certainly a football coach by vocation and a guitar player by avocation. Playing guitar has been a large part of my life—mostly solace seeking. I think we all need that.”