

Mr. Shred-Jangles

Long dogged and annoyed by the “shred” epithet, Paul Gilbert uses engrained jangle-pop sensibilities, deft tone selection, and jaw-dropping licks to prove he can’t be pigeonholed—even on an all-instrumental album like his new *Fuzz Universe*.

BY SHAWN HAMMOND



The term “shredder” gets thrown around willy-nilly as if it proffers a canned, easily digestible taste of what the guitarist behind the label is all about musically. And often it’s used in derision—an efficient, two-syllable means of writing off a player without listening to a note of their supposed wanking. That’s B.S.

Yeah, all of us can think of a zillion players to back up the disingenuous argument. Guys that serve up unmelodic, tinny-toned, groove-starved indulgence as if they were afraid the universe’s supply of notes is finite and must be used up as quickly as possible before someone else steals them. But the conveniently overlooked flaw in this hypothesis, of course, is that we can all name a zillion examples of utter lameness in any genre under the sun.

Naturally, this levelheaded, well-reasoned point is never going to eradicate the tendency of some players to dismiss whole swaths of art because of tenuous mental associations. For them, pointy-head-stocked guitars, having worn spandex 20+ years ago, and the ability to sweep-pick like a badass will always equate to “uncool shred.”

But the rest of us who sit back and listen without prejudging will always be rewarded. And Paul Gilbert—a notoriously gifted jangle-pop songwriter who can also melt your mind with string-skipping neoclassical licks—is one of those guys standing at the ready to demolish our preconceptions like Godzilla squashing skyscrapers ►►