

Mr. Shred-Jangles

caught it on video and posted it on YouTube [search for "Paul Gilbert concede il bis... sulla batteria!!!"]. When I watched it, I realized that this was the best drum solo I've ever done. So I wanted to write a song around it—sort of my own version of "Wipe Out." In studio, I thought it would be better to let a real drummer take the solos, and Jeff Bowders did a stunning job. When I listen to the song now, though, I almost wish that I had shortened the arrangement and left out the guitar solos. My favorite part is the twangy guitar and the drums. I'm hoping to teach my drummer how to play the guitar part, and then I can do the drum solo live. I like playing guitar, but drums are more fun than anything.

What did you use for the Leslie-flavored chord stabs in "Mantra the Lawn"?

That was a Hughes & Kettner Rotosphere pedal.

What's your favorite guitar part on the new album—and why?

I really like "Fuzz Universe." It's very representative of the metal side of my guitar playing, but I think the song and playing are my best yet in that style. I love so many parts in "Olympic," too: It has arpeggio ideas that I've never done before over a chord progression I've never done before. I think "Mantra the Lawn" has some of my best phrasing and vibrato, and "Will My Screen Door Stop Neptune" has a super-fast solo over chord changes where I nailed it in the first take. It's actually the solo from the demo. I don't know if I'll ever be able to play it that well again. I haven't tried because I never did a second take!

What did you use to record the album?

I used a Marshall Vintage Modern head into a THD Hot Plate and then into a Randall Isolation cabinet with a 12" Celestion. I used two mics, a Shure SM57 and a Royer ribbon mic, plugged into two AMEK System 9098 mic preamps and then into Pro Tools.

Were there any unusual aspects about how you wrote for or recorded this record?

I think the most unusual thing is that a 43-year-old guy who listens to Johnny Cash, Silivius Weiss lute music, Bulgarian women's vocal choirs, B.B. King, Melody Gardot, Justin Currie, and the Bee Gees for inspiration ends up with an album of screaming rock guitar. It's hard to shake off those teenage years of Van Halen, Rush, Randy Rhoads, Robin Trower, Pat Travers, Frank Marino, Gary Moore, and the Ramones. [Laughs.]

You're wearing headphones live both to protect your hearing and as monitors, right? How severe is your hearing loss, and how does it complicate the process of selecting tones, getting appropriate levels, mixing, etc.?

My hearing loss doesn't bother me when I'm playing music. I can hear tones easily, I can feel the guitar because I'm playing it, and



Gilbert shows off his Hanes and his Ibanez PGM double-neck. "The necks are just two normal 6-strings. I eventually decided to use the bottom neck as a 3-string and I tuned the three strings in low, mid, and high octaves, allowing me to play some wild arpeggio licks that would be impossible with a normal tuning."

it's rock 'n' roll, so it's loud anyway. I really notice my hearing loss when I'm talking to people. It's hard for me to differentiate consonants, so the words "Tim," "tin," "thin," and "him" all sound the same to me unless the person is talking pretty loud. It really varies from person to person. My wife speaks very clearly, so when I'm around her I feel like my hearing is close to normal. But did you ever see that movie with Nicole Kidman called *The Hours*? It's about two hours of women whispering to each other. I didn't have a fighting chance in that one! I saw it on an airplane where there were engines to compete with and no subtitles. Through no fault of her own, I will be angry at Nicole Kidman for a long time to come. Speak up, woman! [Laughs.]

You've done a lot of clinics and seminars over the years—what are some of the most common questions you get?

I hope that I can answer people's questions and give them something useful in my answers, but I think the most valuable communication between musicians happens musically. Whenever I get the chance, I go to Musicians Institute to do private lessons. This gives me a chance to jam with students and listen to what they're saying with their guitars. It becomes very obvious what they need to work on without them having to ask anything. And it's almost always the same