

profile

Trey Alexander

Guitar Hero 2006

Electric guitar strapped around his neck, Trey Alexander stoops into the microphone, smiles, greets the audience, turns around, flicks back his long hair and starts playing what sounds like a laid-back jazzy piece. Eventually he begins to rock a bit, improvising intricate riffs, and at one point, hoists the guitar behind his head and plays that way without missing a note.

With a six-minute performance of his own composition called “The Modern Equivalent,” preserved on YouTube, Alexander won *Guitar Player* magazine’s 2006 Guitar Hero competition from among nine finalists in San Francisco. Now 26, the Lancaster resident is a full-time guitar instructor, performs with his own group, the Trey Alexander Band, and with an acoustic trio.

Q. How did you get started playing?

We had an antique acoustic guitar that was for decorative purposes. I recall “Voodoo Chile” by Jimi Hendrix being one of the first guitar intros I had heard [on the radio] and tried to learn. The guitar only had three strings, but my dad heard me playing it and decided that I should get guitar lessons nonetheless.

Q. How did your father contribute to your guitar career?

When I was 18 I saw [Grammy-winning guitarist] Steve Vai perform. When I returned from the concert my father listened to me play for about two hours. He brought me upstairs after the long jam session and said, “Trey, I believe that you are going to be one of the greatest guitarists of all time.” These were his last words, because that night he suffered from a brain hemorrhage.

I will never forget those words. No matter how bad or tough the day, that’s what I remember to get me to try and make a difference.

Q. What’s the hardest song you ever learned to play?

Caprice No. 16, by Nicolò Paganini. The song still haunts me, and only on the best of days can I make it all the way through, playing it very clean.

Q. Do you write your own music?

Yes, and I also have a great friend of mine by the name of Hassan Ali that I compose with. He is a brilliant writer.

Q. Whose music do you most enjoy playing?

It would have to be the Beatles. They just wanted to bring everyone together and make this a world a better place. I believe that music is a language and is given to us to help break down the walls of miscommunication. It is one of the only things that differentiates no color, race or nationality and brings the world together.

Q. Who’s the greatest rock guitarist of all time?

This is always such a tough question! But I would have to say that Jimi Hendrix made quite a stamp in time with his guitar wizardry.

Q. What other kinds of music do you listen to?

I love it all. Anymore, I just walk into the record store, close my eyes and pick up


an album and buy it. Popular doesn’t mean anything. I think all styles of music have amazing qualities. One of my biggest dreams is to travel the world, learn about other cultures and listen to the music firsthand.

Q. Are you a performer who teaches, or a teacher who performs?

I don’t believe there will ever be one without the other. I teach because I believe that the next generations are going to make the difference, and the only thing our generation can do is help them to learn and understand the things that we have learned and seen. I perform because I love being a part of something magical, a place where time seems to stop and no one is thinking of the negative. They are enjoying life and music.

Q. Playing the guitar behind your head in your winning performance was an interesting touch. Do you teach your guitar students how to do things like that?

If students would ever ask to learn how to do that I would definitely show them those tricks. But guys like Stevie Ray Vaughan and Jimi Hendrix invented those ideas, and those are the guys to watch.



Q. What's your long-term career objective?

To be a quarter of the man my father was — somehow make a difference in the world, to help people come together. To stop all the hatred and break down the walls that have been built up all of these years. Careers come and go, but I just hope that throughout my life I can stay true to those dreams and goals.

— STEVE KENNEDY

Visit www.centralpamagazine.com for the full interview with Trey Alexander and a link to his winning performance on YouTube.