

Joe Satriani and Elliot Easton of the Cars among celebrity judges who selected winner

Ladd Smith of Nashville Crowned Guitar Player's Guitar Hero 2007

October, 2007

Ten finalists battled for the international title of "Guitar Hero" at *Guitar Player's* Guitar Hero 2007 competition Friday, October 12 at the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco. All ten tremendously talented players were roundly applauded by celebrity judges Joe Satriani, Steve Lukather, Nuno Bettencourt, Elliot Easton, Greg Howe, and Mike Varney. In the end, they chose Ladd Smith from Nashville, Tennessee, as the champion, Les Robot from Edmonton, Alberta, as first runner-up and Danny B. Harvey from Canyon County, CA, as second runner-up.

"What a celebration of white-hot, burning guitar!" said *Guitar Player* Editor in Chief Michael Molenda. "All ten contestants were simply awesome -- on fire, in fact -- and the crowd was devouring every run, riff, and lick. It was great to see such enthusiasm over transcendent guitar playing, as you certainly don't hear these styles very much on radio or television these days."

"Ladd Smith took the GH07 championship because his 'Outrun the Train' was a thrill ride of furious note barrages, clean-toned spank, and country melodicism," continued Molenda. "It's incredibly difficult to play fast runs so pristinely -- without a little help from distortion or sustain from the amp -- and the judges acknowledged this in their decision."

"This has been the most incredible thrill for me," said Smith, who was born in Stillwater, Oklahoma, raised in a guitar shop in Hendersonville Tennessee, and as a teen was often found backstage at the Grand Ole Opry and hanging around Nashville studios. "It was such an honor to even be chosen to be a part of the event, and I was just so happy to be there. I had absolutely no expectations to win--especially after hearing the contestants rehearse at soundcheck, and I'm still recovering from the shock. To be able to go into a primarily rock-dominated event representing Nashville country music--and to demonstrate the complexity and intelligence of what the genre can be--is what I'm most proud of. I'm just so thankful."

Further thrills were provided by host Brendon Small, co-creator of Adult Swim's *Metalocalypse*, as well as from the house band Thud Factor. In addition to his trophy, winner Ladd Smith received a Digidesign 003 Factory Pro Tools LE system (value: \$2,495), a Microsoft Windows Vista Ultimate software package, a Guitar Hero II Xbox 360 bundle from Activision, an Epiphone Elitist Tak Matsumoto Signature Guitar With Hard Case AND an Epiphone Masterbilt EF-500RCCE Acoustic Guitar With Hard Gigbag, choice of a Mesa/Boogie Stiletto or Lone Star amp, a Jimi Hendrix Wah and MXR Distortion III guitar f/x pedal from Dunlop Manufacturing, and much more.

Activision, Microsoft and Digidesign partnered to present the 3rd annual *Guitar Player's* Guitar Hero competition. Activision produces the red-hot video game Guitar Hero and was on hand with pre-launch demos of their new release, Guitar Hero III on Xbox 360-outfitted kiosks on the show floor.

The premiere *Guitar Player's* Guitar Hero competition was held in 2005 at Cleveland's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame where New York's Dominic Frasca was crowned with the Guitar Hero title. Last year's champion was Trey Alexander of Pennsylvania.

The ten finalists -- representing a wide range of guitar styles including Latin Shred, Rockabilly, Country and Rock -- were: Jamie Robinson (Toronto, Ontario), Juan Coronado (Whitby, Ontario) Tony Smotherman (Jacksonville, Florida), Taka Minamino (Hollywood, CA), Danny B. Harvey (Canyon Country, CA), Curtis Fornadley (Playa Del Rey, CA), Casey Harshbarger (Indianapolis, Indiana), Ladd Smith (Nashville, Tennessee), Les Robot (real name: Cory Melnychuk) (Edmonton, Alberta), and Chris Peters (Orlando, Florida).

Guitar Player's Guitar Hero is sponsored by Activision, Digidesign, and Microsoft with additional sponsorship from Epiphone Guitars, Mesa/Boogie amps, Jodavi ZZYX Snapjack Cables, Dunlop Manufacturing, Moody Leather, Planet Waves, and Sonicbids.

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For those who missed the event, a complete video version will be available early in November.

Check out these reviews of *Guitar Player's* Guitar Hero online!

<http://www.hardrockchick.com/2007/10/14/guitar-hero-championship-qamh-101207>

<http://www.modernguitars.com/archives/003889.html>

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