

READER'S SPOTLIGHT

No matter how old you are, where you live, or what style of music you play, this column offers you the potential to be recognized by your peers. If you're chosen for Spotlight, you'll receive an Ernie Ball tee shirt, customized EB picks with your name on them, and a box of the Slinky strings of your choice—as well as having your two best mp3s promoted online on EB Radio (ernieball.com). To be considered for Mike Varney's Spotlight, please send a CD of your music, your email address, a 300 dpi photo, and your bio to: Spotlight c/o Mike Varney, Box P, Novato, CA, 94945. Note: You will not be contacted unless you are selected.



GUITARIST: Trey Alexander

AGE: 24

STYLES: Melodic progressive fusion, jazz, country, classical, blues, rock

INFLUENCES: Steve Vai, Jason Becker, Greg Howe, Jimi Hendrix

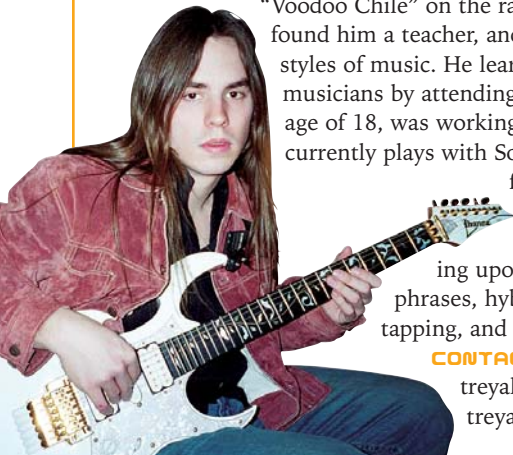
MAIN GUITAR: Ibanez JEM

LOCATION: Lancaster, PA

BACKGROUND: At 15, Alexander pulled down a guitar that had been a family wall decoration, and began playing after hearing Hendrix's "Voodoo Chile" on the radio. Within a week, his dad found him a teacher, and he began to study different styles of music. He learned how to play with other musicians by attending open mic jams, and, by the age of 18, was working on his first album. Alexander currently plays with Sonic Lux—a progressive rock fusion band with jam band elements—and his style is both melodic and technical, drawing upon highly developed legato phrases, hybrid picking, eight-finger tapping, and sweep arpeggios.

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GUITARIST: Katrina Johansson

AGE: 32

STYLE:

Instrumental
rock

INFLUENCES:

Joe Satriani, Gary Moore, Eddie Van Halen, Ritchie Blackmore

MAIN GUITAR: Dean 79 ML

LOCATION: Chicago, IL

BACKGROUND: Johansson started her training on classical guitar while in her teens, before switching to rock. A veteran of numerous heavy rock bands, Johansson honed her skills playing festivals

and clubs around the U.S., covering songs by Iron Maiden, Van Halen, and Accept. But, after seeing Joe Satriani, she was inspired to focus on her guitar playing and write instrumental rock tunes. (Guitarist—and speed king—Michael Angelo Batio was impressed enough with her talent to produce her solo CD.) Johansson has a great feel, and some incredible chops played within strong compositions. In addition to her excellent phrasing and strong vibrato, Johansson is an extremely impressive speed picker.

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GUITARIST: Jon Clarkson

AGE: 33

STYLE: Rock

INFLUENCES: Paul Gilbert, the Beatles, Eric Johnson, Frank Zappa, Jimmy Page, Jimi Hendrix

MAIN GUITARS: '95 Fender American Standard Stratocaster, PRS McCarty

LOCATION: Mattoon, IL

BACKGROUND: After hearing Van Halen's "Eruption," Clarkson sold his baseball card collection to buy his first guitar and amp. Clarkson earned his stripes playing in a series of original and cover bands, but, at some point, the light bulb went on, and he realized that "life is much more enjoyable when you don't practice scales for eight hours a day!" After deciding not to attend GIT or Berklee, he became more interested in songwriting. Currently, Clarkson works with an '80s metal tribute/parody band (Leather Pistol), a classic disco show band (Poprocks), and country rocker Becca Kaid. On his latest CD, *Toast*, Clarkson reveals himself to be a talented writer, guitarist, singer, and engineer, creating an enjoyable amalgam of melodic rock and ferocious yet purposeful high-tech solos.

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Mike Varney is a San Francisco Bay Area record producer and owner of Shrapnel, Blues Bureau, and Tone Center Records.