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created this strong and beautiful music."

"What's the key to being able to express yourself so naturally through an instrument?"

"I don't know if I have an answer for that. It is definitely a goal, everytime I pick up the guitar, to make that transmission from feelings to music as vivid as possible. I suppose you have to relax. You have to put all thoughts of career and ego and what it looks like, all those sorts of things — you have to forget them.

"Some people are not good at knowing things because it stops them from being creative, whereas other people thrive on it. I've personally never had a problem knowing a lot and using that to be expressive. Other students I have feel uncomfortable knowing a lot about music, they prefer to sort of blindly charge ahead. There were a lot of people like Jimi Hendrix, who may not have known all the proper names for all the things he was playing, but he had his own language, and that's all that really matters. Inadvertently you become theoretical about whatever it is that you're doing. Either you use your own words or you use the accepted ones. If you're the type that likes to let the world in and then reflect it then knowing music theory helps you digest it really quick.

"A good example of that is when we were in Jakarta recently. Mick threw a party for the band and invited a Gamalon orchestra to play. During the break I went up to one of the musicians and had him show me how to play this one string instrument. I knew from the sound of the music what was going on. I knew that all the bells were pentatonic and I knew the basic thrust of their music. It's not that I get intellectual about it but it's immediate with me. Then one guy taps me on the shoulder. I didn't know Indonesian and they weren't very good at English. He was showing me how to play a single battery on these gamalons. I started doing that and all of a sudden Jimmy

came over and the guy showed him how to play something and before we knew it we had almost the whole band playing these and we just jammed for about 40 minutes. We just surrendered ourselves to these gamalon players to guide us with the spirit of the music. Nobody in the band was hindered by any intellectual barrier."

Teaching & Learning

How long have you been teaching music?

"On and off for 15 years, maybe more."

What was Steve Vai like back then?

"He was one of my first students. He was remarkable, I knew after a few weeks that he was going to be a fantastic player."

What about another of your students, Metallica's Kirk Hammett?

"I bought the new Metallica last night and I haven't had time to stick it on yet. He was excited about it. I heard the demo tapes because the night before I left on tour we had our last lessons and he would bring in these tapes and say what can I play over this, and they were going to be the songs on the record. He was trying to figure out options for solos. He had his own ideas and a lot of the stuff he was playing he wasn't quite sure what the names of it were, but he was coming up with some fantastic stuff. I'm really looking forward to throwing that cassette on and seeing what it sounds like."

What do you listen to yourself?

"Just about anything. I've been listening to the Sugarcubes this last week. They have this woman vocalist whose singing is unbelievable."

Composing Yourself

With songs like 'Always With Me' and 'Rubina', do you know already how they will sound before you play them?

"With 'Rubina' I had the song written in my head. It took me a while to come up with the right tuning because there is just guitar playing

harmonics, and the synth bass, and that is really the only rhythm in the entire song. So the way to do that was to create two or three tunings. The guitar sound itself we experimented with for a while. I told John, we have to somehow record it so that when the solo comes on it's heavy but still sounds beautiful — it can't be flat in your face. We had to put one mike up close and we took another mike and put it about 12 feet away in the air. So what we got were these two really strange tracks, and by putting them together got this faraway sound I was looking for.

"With 'Always' I'd come up with the song rhythmically and harmonically, but when I first started to play over it I realised I didn't have the finesse to bring the song to the proper level. I'd sit down and play for an hour, stop for an hour or two and then go back and listen to it again, play some more... It took about three days to figure out what I was supposed to do on it. I know that I wanted it to be a continuous statement, not like verse, chorus, solo. I wanted it to be a linear guitar piece. I knew what it was but my fingers weren't quite there yet, so I had to train myself to be subtle."

It must be very rewarding to be able to inspire guitar players and give others listening pleasure at the same time?

"I love it, that's a dream y'know. When people like your music, that's great. I remember doing the trio shows and playing a song like 'Always With Me, Always With You' and hearing the audience singing the melody over the volume of the guitar. I feel extremely fortunate."

What's your goal for the future, Joe?

"To keep doing what I'm doing would be nice. That success would also allow me to grow musically but I'm certainly not going to let any lesser amount of success stop me from playing music so I'm just going to try to stay alive, make the world a better place and keep playing guitar."

GEOFF DUNN

FERB

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