

Cambridge Elements

Elements in Popular Music

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University of Huddersfield

ROCK GUITAR VIRTUOSOS

*Advances in Electric Guitar Playing,
Technology, and Culture*

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-05597-0 — Rock Guitar Virtuosos
Jan-Peter Herbst, Alexander Paul Vallejo
Frontmatter
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Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
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a department of the University of Cambridge.

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www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009055970
DOI: 10.1017/9781009052962

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First published 2023

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-009-05597-0 Paperback
ISSN 2634-2472 (online)
ISSN 2634-2464 (print)

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Rock Guitar Virtuosos

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DOI: 10.1017/9781009052962
First published online: November 2023

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Abstract: The guitar has been an integral part of popular music and mainstream culture for many decades and in many places of the world. This Element examines the development and current state of virtuosic rock guitar in terms of playing, technology, and culture. Supported by technological advances such as extended-range guitars, virtuosos in the twenty-first century are exploring ways to expand standard playing techniques in a climate where ever-higher levels of perfection are expected. As musician-entrepreneurs, contemporary rock guitar virtuosos record, produce, and market their music themselves; operate equipment companies; and sell merchandise, tablature, and lessons online. For their social media channels, they regularly create videos and interact with their followers while having to balance building their tribe and finding the time to develop their craft to stay competitive. For a virtuoso, working situations have changed considerably since the last century; the aloof rock star has been replaced by the approachable virtuoso-guitarist-composer-innovator-producer-promoter-YouTuber-teacher-entrepreneur.

Keywords: virtuosity, electric guitar, rock music, metal music, technology

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ISBNs: 9781009055970 (PB), 9781009052962 (OC)
ISSNs: 2634-2472 (online), 2634-2464 (print)

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