ROCK GUITAR VIRTUOSOS

Advances in Electric Guitar Playing, Technology, and Culture

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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 For a virtuoso, working situations have changed considerably since the last century; the aloof rock star has been replaced by the approachable virtuoso-guitarist-composer-innovator-producer-promoter-YouTuber-teacher-entrepreneur.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)
## Contents

1 Introduction 1
2 Establishing a Canon 6
3 Overview of Electric Guitar Playing Techniques 16
4 First-Generation Rock Guitar Heroes 20
5 The Emergence and Decline of Shred 28
6 Guitar Technology, Playing, and Culture in the Twenty-First Century 45
7 The Virtual Scene, and How Contemporary Virtuosos Make a Living 68
8 Conclusion 81

Appendix 84
Listening and Media Examples 88
References 89