

# Brixworth and District Newsletter

# u3a

## Learn, laugh, live

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### THE BIG DEBATE – WHO IS THE GREATEST GUITARIST

With so many talented and accomplished musicians using the guitar as their instrument of choice, from the early bluesmen to modern-day shredders and rockers, it is inevitable that no two-people will choose the same guitarist as their “greatest guitarist of all time”. It would be very easy for me to say that, in my opinion, my vote would go to ..... However, that is not my intention. Instead, this month’s musical journey may, hopefully, shine some light on a few players with whom you might not be too familiar, and who you might like to give a further look and listen to after this. Although a guitar is just a guitar, the sounds that they make in the hands of the ‘top players’ can be very different, as I will endeavour to demonstrate in this month’s randomly ordered selection.

We start off with a player who is technically perfect, and whom we saw playing the piano in an earlier musical edition of the newsletter. That is ERIC JOHNSON, who is way above the technical skills of the more well-known Eric Clapton. The track I have selected really does demonstrate his virtuosity on the 6-string Fender Stratocaster, the tonal quality and changes are superb and a delight on the ears - [Eric Johnson - Trail of Tears ‘Live 1988’ - YouTube](#)

Jazzing it up a bit, we have Swedish showman YNGWIE (*Ing-Vay*) MALMSTEEN, whose concert and album playlists includes classical pieces from Paganini, Vivaldi, Bach, etc. He is the only player featured today, who appears on Time Magazines ‘Top Ten Guitarists’. He is also reputed to be the first ‘shredder’ but, amazingly, is not listed on the Top Ten Shredders. The list includes No.1 PAUL GILBERT, No.2 JOHN PETRUCCI\*, No. 6 STEVE VAI, No. 8 GUTHRIE GOVAN\*, and No. 9 JOE SATRIANI. \*JP & GG were featured in the June and April Music Supplements, with the other three included in this newsletter.

So, the next piece of music is [Yngwie Malmsteen - Rising Force ‘Live 1989’ - YouTube](#)

You will recall seeing YES play ‘Owner of a Lonely Heart’ in the June edition of the Music Supplement. Well, you are in for a real treat with our next piece. Yes, you guessed it, here it is again, but this time played by PAUL GILBERT, who magically uses his guitar to ‘sing’ the words. Paul is another little-known player who is famous for his masterclasses when he interprets the sung-word into musical notes. Before developing this amazing skill, he played with American bands ‘Mr Big’ and ‘Racer X’. [Paul Gilbert - Owner of a Lonely Heart - Bing video](#)

No list would be complete without JOE BONAMASSA, whose sell-out gig at Nottingham I attended a few years ago. He is a modern-day bluesman, and one of the best, whose young protégé, Ryan McGarvey, I had the pleasure of seeing at The Stables in 2016 on his first visit to the UK. This is therefore the very moving track by big Joe.

[Joe Bonamassa - Happier Times - Live at Royal Albert Hall - Bing video](#)

Most people will have heard of the rock band DEEP PURPLE, probably from the era of Richie Blackmore, before he left to form Rainbow – a great band. Can you imagine Deep Purple without a lead guitar? Up step STEVE MORSE, formerly with US bands The Dixie Dregs and Kansas, who joined Deep Purple in 1994. He is a real class act who, when touring with Deep Purple, is always given a solo slot, hence the reason why I attended many of their gigs, having been a big fan after hearing him play with Kansas, with whom he recorded two excellent albums in 1986 & 1988.

Here he is with his own band. [Steve Morse Band - Brink Of The Edge - Bing video](#)

For a great many years, I have been a massive fan of Neil Young, since the release of his first four albums. No one would say he was a good singer and no one would ever rate him as a great guitarist. However, in those early days 1968-1972, he wrote some great tunes, all featuring wonderful harmonies and his distinctive distorted/funky/grungy guitar sounds. That imperfect/twangy sound, some say 'sloppy playing', is believed to be what inspired Kurt Cobain to start the Grunge Genre of rock music some years later. This is one of his lesser-known tracks, but a good example of his quirky style. [Neil Young - Words 'Live 2000' - Bing video](#)

Sadly, I have never seen Neil in concert, while the next guy I have seen many times. This is the amazing JOE SATRIANI, who very rarely sings, so you need to be a fan of instrumental rock music. Why would you want to sing, when you are one of the best guitar players in the world! Here, with the deeply moving "Crying", is Joe at his emotional best.

[Joe Satriani – Crying - 2013 - Bing video](#)

Let's hear some more bluesy stuff, this time from New Yorker RAY LAMONTAGNE, with the second track from his 2015 album 'Ouroboros'. If this doesn't get you jiggling in your seat, or dancing around the room, then nothing will.

[Ray LaMontagne - Hey, No Pressure - 'Live' - Bing video](#)

What are the chances of seeing a live performance of the classic FREE track 'Wishing Well', which was co-penned by the fabulous guitar player that was the late Paul Kossoff and released as a single in 1972. Well, this is our lucky day, because the next piece, not only features FREE vocalist PAUL RODGERS and his band BAD COMPANY, but also two guitar giants; NEIL SCHON from JOURNEY, and SLASH from GUNS & ROSES.

[Neal Schon, Slash, Paul Rodgers - Wishing Well - YouTube](#)

It was another sad day, just over ten years ago, when the late great GARY MOORE passed away, while on holiday in Spain. Originally with Irish rockers THIN LIZZY, it was after he left the band, for the second time in 1979, that he concentrated on his love of blues music. This video was shot at the 2010 Montreux Festival, less than a year before he died. It would have been easy to select his most well-known track, the beautiful "Parisienne Walkways", but decided against it, in favour of this track, simply described as the "best guitar solo ever", which is open for discussion.

[Gary Moore - best guitar solo - possibly - YouTube](#) [sorry about the annoying advert halfway through]

I wonder how many u3a members will be familiar with the name ALEX LIFESON, perhaps not many, I guess. He is responsible for the guitar sounds on all the RUSH albums, RUSH being a three-piece rock band from Canada who have played to sell-out stadia all around the world for many years. Like all of our featured artists today, he too is held in high regard by other fellow guitar greats. The track 'Working Man' was recorded live in 2011.

[Rush – Working Man – featuring Alex Lifeson - YouTube](#)

FRANK ZAPPA is likely to be a name familiar to most people, probably because of his crazy antics, as well as his outrageous music and lyrics. However, he was responsible for enhancing the musical career of the legend that is STEVE VAI. Steve performed and recorded with Zappa from 1980 to 1983, having spent the two years prior to that as a music transcriptionist for Zappa, starting when he was only eighteen years of age. After twelve years as a solo artist, it was in 1995 that he joined forces with [Joe Satriani](#), when they began their series of world tours under the banner G3. Over the following years, the pair of them invited other top-notch guitarists to join them on tour and, it was in 1996, that they brought the show to the UK with [Eric Johnson](#) as their first invited guest. Since then, other famous names have made the tour, including Kenny Wayne Shepherd, [Yngwie Malmsteen](#), [John Petrucci](#), Robert Fripp, [Paul Gilbert](#), [Steve Morse](#), [Steve Lukather](#), Uli Jon Roth, Michael Schenker, [Neal Schon](#), Brian May, Billy Gibbons, George Lynch, [Patrick Rondat](#), and [Guthrie Govan](#). This then, is Steve Vai at his very best from 2019.

[Steve Vai - For the Love of God – 2019 - YouTube](#)

And finally, we return to the start of this newsletter, with another chance to view the mastery and technical skills of Eric Johnson. Not particularly well-known outside America, his guitar playing, as a session-man in his early days, was featured on many top artists recordings, including Carole King, with whom he also toured, Cat Stevens, Christopher Cross, etc. It was the latter who persuaded Warner Brothers to sign him up, and the rest is history. When Joe Satriani set up the very first of a series of G3 tours, it was Eric Johnson who was invited to join him and Steve Vai, indicating the high esteem in which his playing talents were acknowledged. Unlike Joe and Steve, both larger than life characters, as are most other loud guitarists, Eric is a quiet, shy, kind of guy.

[Eric Johnson – 3-track Medley 2016 - YouTube](#)

So who is your "best guitarist in the world". There are many lists headed by the likes of Jimi Hendrix, or Eric Clapton, or Brian May, or Jimmy Page, or David Gilmour. For myself, I would not place any of this quintet above those individuals that I have introduced to you today. In fact, it would be impossible to choose just one as the best above all others. **If you are into this, please send me your top five guitarists, for featuring here in the future.**