

SPOTLIGHT KID

DISCOVERING UNDERGROUND TALENT

Justin Tolan



RESIDING IN THE USA AND STUDYING MUSIC, JUSTIN TOLAN HAS BEEN A NAME OF INTEREST IN THE GUITAR VIRTUOSO CIRCLES FOR SOME TIME NOW. HIS TECHNIQUE AND CAPABILITY FROM SUCH A YOUNG AGE HAVE MADE HIM THE TALKING POINT FOR MANY PEOPLE, AND HIS DEMO HAS RECEIVED ENTHUSIASTIC PRESS FROM EVERY QUARTER. NOW JUSTIN'S TALENT CAN BE FULLY REALISED AS HE PREPARES TO UNLEASH HIS FIRST FULL LENGTH SOLO ALBUM...

1) Tell us a bit about where your from and what its like to live there.

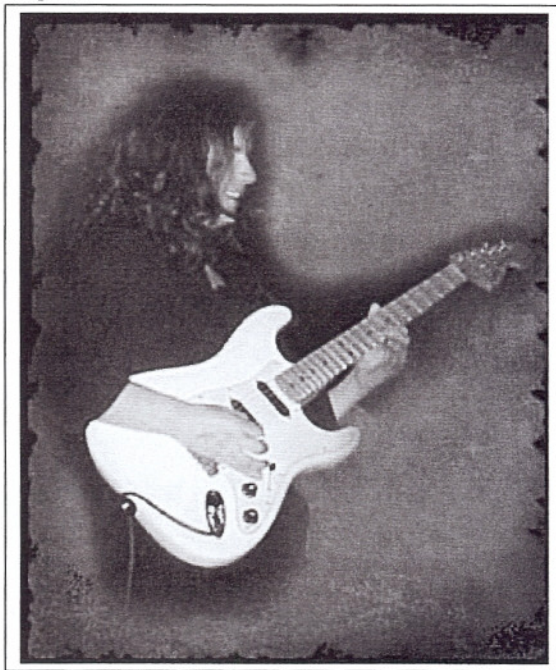
I am from the deep southern region of the United States, in the foothills of the Georgia Mountains, located north of Atlanta. It is ok to live here but there is not very much to do for entertainment. I definitely do not fit in here and am relocating to Boston next month.

2) What made you pick up a guitar in the first place?

When I was eight years old I had a desire to play, so I got an acoustic guitar and took some lessons but was not motivated enough to practice. Around the time I was twelve years old I heard Randy Rhoads and was really taken back. I started taking lessons again and practiced religiously.

3) I understand your heroes are very much in the Neo Classical/Shred Genre. It must have been very challenging to learn to play in this style. Did You ever get frustrated when you first started out

Well when I first started out they were solely in the neo classical style, but I grew out of that eventually and learned to appreciate and enjoy players and artists of all genres. It was very difficult to learn the style because it is so hard and there are no shortcuts. It took years of isolation and hard work, from the ages of 12-17 I had no social life whatsoever. I used to spend my weekends playing through instructional tapes that I bought at the guitar store that I worked at. I also didn't sleep very much throughout that time in my life.



4) Your technique from such a young age is phenomenal. At what age did you start playing and how long a day would you practice

I got into actually practicing and studying around the age of twelve. At first it was a few hours here and a few hours there a day, but after I heard Yngwie Malmsteen and George Bellas it was six to eight hours a day on school days and eight to fourteen hours a day on weekends. It was constant.

5) Do you think it's equally important to practice composition and technique

I think its really important to practice technique oriented things if you aspire to play in a style that is technically demanding, but as far as composition goes I could never actually practice it, I would just do it and experiment with ideas that I had at the time. I think it's important to write every time you feel like it and don't write when you don't feel like it. I could never force myself to write. Either I was inspired or I wasn't. But I think both of them are equally important.

6) What Guitars and gear do you use?



Well I use all Strats that I equipped with DiMarzios. I own a couple Yngwie Strats and some other Strats with warmoth scalloped necks on them, as well as non-scalloped guitars. I use Marshall amps, all different kinds of strings and Dunlop picks.

7) I understand you have just completed the recording of your first full album. What can we expect from this album and how would you describe your playing on the album

Well I would say that if you are a fan of metal or neo classical music, you should enjoy it. Some of it is purist neo classical music, but I tend to have darker overtones in my music. It is not a typical guitar record in the traditional sense. As far as my playing goes I would say that it is the best playing of mine to date technically and it is more mature than other recordings I have done. The record was produced by a good friend of mine Corbin King, and aside from being a top notch metal producer he also would make sure that my playing was as clean as possible so that only the best playing made it to the record. Without him the project would have turned out very differently.

8) What inspires you to write music and keep practicing?

Well my practicing these days is very different from what it was one or two years ago. I write a lot of new ideas now more so than I did over the past couple years. It could either be an image I see, something a person says or does, or even a movie that could inspire a new idea. For technical guitar playing I still use the tried and true method of practicing things with a metronome until I can do them with ease.

9) Are there any new guitarists on the scene who you think are quite exiting and who are worth a mention

No, but I will say that I really enjoyed John 5's record he did with Shrapnel, that guy is a tremendous player who is doing something really unique.

10) I understand you trained under Joe Stump at Berklee. I'm a HUGE fan of Joe Stump myself. What was Joe like to train with and how do you feel when people accuse Joe of just copying Yngwie

Joe is truly a master in every sense of the word. Joe was a fantastic teacher and what was even cooler about him is that he would take time to jam with me, something most teachers would not do. When people accuse him of being an Yngwie clone it is because they are ignorant. It is as if any guitar player decides to play in Harmonic Minor, they will be called an Yngwie clone automatically. Joe does not sound at all like Yngwie to me.

11) As Yngwie is such an important figure in this genre, what do you think of Yngwie Malmsten and his playing, even today

Well I think Yngwie Malmsteen is without a doubt one of the greatest guitar players to have ever touched the instrument, and without him guitar playing would not be what it is today. I am a diehard fan of his first record and still maintain that is some of the best guitar playing that will ever be recorded. That being said I find his music now to be kind of redundant. The guitar playing is always good, but it takes more than good guitar playing to keep my interest and attention. As far as Yngwie as a person, I have no idea because I haven't met him. If the stories I have heard about his attitude are true, then I have no interest in meeting him at all. I resent rock star attitudes.

12) What does Justin Tolan do to relax when he's not playing Guitar?

I spend time with a couple close friends of mine, and I also watch a ton of movies. I usually watch between seven and ten movies a week. I am a huge fan of Tim Burton so I see everything he does more than once.

13) What would be your dream line up, if you could play with anybody?

This question will have two sets of answers. In the metal/neo classical genre I would have King Diamond on Vocals, myself and Marty Friedman on guitar, Billy Sheehan on bass, Vitalij Kuprij on Keys and Mikkey Dee on drums. If I could have a non-metal band it would consist of myself on guitars, Bjork on vocals, and all members of Sigur Ros' to make up the rest of the lineup.

14) What does the future hold for Justin Tolan?

In September I move to Boston to attend Berklee, and from there I honestly couldn't tell you. Maybe I will put together a vocal band, or get into film scoring, or put together something completely original. At this point I really couldn't tell you. As far as my record goes, I will most likely self release it, unless the right people are interested.