

MIKE VARNEY'S SPOTLIGHT

No matter how old you are, where you live, or what style of music you play, this column offers you the potential to be recognized by your peers. If you're chosen for Spotlight, you'll receive an Ernie Ball t-shirt, customized EB picks with your name on them, and a box of the Slinky strings of your choice—as well as having your two best mp3s promoted online on EB Radio (ernieball.com). To be considered for Mike Varney's Spotlight, please send a CD of your music, your bio, a high-resolution color jpg owned by you, your email address, and phone number to: Spotlight c/o Mike Varney, Box P, Novato, CA, 94945. Note: Mike will only contact you if you are chosen.

EB RADIO



GUITAR STRINGS



GUITARIST: Roland Nipp

AGE: 41

STYLE: Jazz, rock, and prog

INFLUENCES: Jeff Beck, David Gilmour, and Mark Knopfler

MAIN GUITAR: Fender Stratocaster

LOCATION: Richmond, B.C., Canada

BACKGROUND: Nipp began playing guitar at the age of 13, inspired by groups such as Led Zeppelin, Steely Dan, and the Beatles, as well as classic R&B and Motown. His tastes later broadened to include jazz artists such as Miles Davis and Keith Jarrett, and, by age 18, he was playing some of the best venues in Canada. Nearly a decade ago, Nipp recorded his highly acclaimed debut, *The Blue Room*, on which he played all of the instruments. Nipp also played everything on 2004's *By Night*, a cinematic album reminiscent of Pink Floyd, Dire Straits, and the Beatles.

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GUITARIST: Greg Marra

AGE: 32

STYLE: Instrumental rock

INFLUENCES: Neal Schon, Paul Gilbert, Greg Howe, and Steve Vai

MAIN GUITAR: Ernie Ball John Petrucci model

LOCATION: Camarillo, CA

BACKGROUND: Marra taught himself to play guitar at age 6, after seeing Kiss on TV. He learned Kiss, Zeppelin, and Hendrix tunes by ear, until hooking up with a teacher who introduced him to music theory, Coltrane, and Miles at age 16. One year later, Marra played his first gig with a metal cover band. Marra moved to Philly at age 22, where he took private lessons with Greg Howe. In 1999, he moved to the L.A. area, where he played on sessions for dozens of developing artists. Last year, he recorded *Collective Disorder*—a disc of high-octane instrumentals showcasing an array of shredding chops in a heavy rock context.

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GUITARIST: Basil Sabra

AGE: 28

STYLE: Blues, fusion, and funk

INFLUENCES: Jimi Hendrix, Carlos Santana, and Frank Gambale

MAIN GUITARS: Fender Stratocaster and WDK Custom

LOCATION: Montreal, Canada/Los Angeles, CA

BACKGROUND: Sabra began playing guitar at age 12, initially drawn to the instrument by the music of AC/DC, Iron Maiden, and Jimi Hendrix. A self-taught musician, Sabra's first guitar was a "Galaxis" his dad picked up on a trip through Europe. After moving to Montreal from Cypress in the early 90's, Sabra bought a Tokai solidbody and a '73 Fender Telecaster, and landed his first gigs playing rock and R&B covers (and some jazz) at age 15. Sabra currently jets between Montreal and L.A., playing on jazz, rock, blues, and trip-hop sessions, as well as serving as musical director for Bettie Mae Fikes, a renowned civil rights activist and blues singer.

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Mike Varney is a San Francisco Bay Area record producer and owner of Shrapnel, Blues Bureau, and Tone Center Records.