

A PORTRAIT OF MODERN ROCK'S BENCHMARK CHRONICLER AND COMMENTATOR

An article by Neil Mach and Claire Lloyd

GuyB is the rock chronicler signposting a new generation of guitar music in the UK. As a patriarchal and honest observer, and a confirmatory preceptor of the rock'n'roll renaissance, GuyB is an enthusiastic and supportive music historian, a brilliant portraitist, a concerned anthologist, and a highly resourceful commentator for what he calls 'modern rock' – a new chapter for rock with a forward-looking agenda, that is socially relevant to the world today rather than an dated nostalgia for rock's past glories.

GuyB is about the stories behind the music – and his signature 60-minute interview specials marry the words and the music – putting the people, the dreams, the challenges under the spotlight in a human and engaging way.

As 2020 drew to a close, Guy's radio work was recognised on a national level when he was shortlisted as Best Music Presenter at the National Audio Production Awards, in the company of top broadcasters from national shows – including

Grammy-Award-winning country musician Brad Paisley (TBI Media); Lauren Laverne (BBC Radio 6 Music); Mark Kermode (Bauer's Scala Radio); and Snoochie Shy (BBC Radio 1 Extra). The milestone was repeated the following year.

THE EVOLUTION OF A BENCHMARK INTERVIEW SERIES

His much-applauded "*Great Music Stories*" was built-up over six years to become an essential part of the rock 'n' roll ecosystem with thousands of fans. October 2020 marked the 900th artist interview hour special. Adding in a further 2,200+ interview shorts, Great Music Stories has become the reference-point interview archive charting the resurgence of a new rock music in Britain today through a new generation of young bands.

Since the start in 2015, GuyB's mission & passion has been to chart and analyse the stories around the people who make the music.

In this way, he acts as an important musical soothsayer and rock emissary.

- He's comfortable with field work; he meets musicians where they live, operate and perform
- He tracks an artist's story over time through key chapters of their story
- Bands often do their first

interviews with GuyB, who champions the unappreciated or less well known (he likes to tell the story of the underdog)

- He cultivates connections (national and international) with new and established artists and helps artists to network
- The marriage of interviews and a signature radio show

For some years GuyB has used radio as a platform to share and air many of his Great Music Stories feature hours. At the beginning of lockdown in March 2020, Guy set up his own weekend radio station from 'the rock caravan' in a field in far flung Sussex. At a time when media across the country were closing and then home bound people needed something to brighten the day, GuyB took his interview series out on his own media platform.

In the months that followed, he gained critical recognition for a run of special interview series on brutally topical issues – the life of working musicians, the future of grassroots venues, mental health in lockdown. The summer was crowned with two full-weekend music festivals on Guy's radio platform. The second these proved to be possibly the biggest 'online' grassroots festival of the summer, drawing sets from 105 UK and USA bands and a weekend audience in excess of 24,000. This period showcases two important parallel features of GuyB's evolving work – a track record for producing

benchmark feature interviews, interwoven with a radio show style and character that has attracted a cult following across the UK and abroad. GuyB's Friday show has proof of concept in creating a rock radio show that appeals to a non-rock mainstream audience – and tellingly, around 25% of Guy's listeners during lockdown were from beyond the UK

A REPUTATION FOR ORIGINALITY AND QUALITY

Guy B's focus with his weekly radio show is always head-down – a focus on doing something original, immersive and engaging for next week's broadcast. The show has attracted a significant loyal audience that tune in on the dot at 5pm every Friday. Listener engagement has always been a key aspect of the Friday show, the listeners counted as participants in shaping the flow of the show – and in doing so presenting the advantages radio can have over streaming and podcasting. For years, young bands across the country had fed back that they struggle to cope with the Twitter snowball for a week when they're on the show.

Many listeners, artists and industry figures have come to regard the Friday show as a benchmark radio show for the genre – the show's output punching above the platform's relative size or resources. Within the radio industry, Great Music Stories has three times been shortlisted for best music

production at national radio awards and won two regional awards. At the end of 2020, GuyB was shortlisted as best music presenter in the company of four national BBC and commercial radio shows at the prestigious UK Audio Production Awards.

Whilst more people are broadcasting now than ever before – partly a result of technology and partly a result of lockdown – GuyB's show cuts through the white noise with a widely regarded consistency of originality and clever programming.

A TASTE-SETTER FOR THE INDUSTRY

Before broadcasting plaudits, Guy's work has built up a track record for breaking the music others then pick up. Hundreds of singles have been premiered on GuyB's show, many rising acts did their first radio interviews with Great Music Stories and GuyB is widely regarded for having helped really nurture and break a number of bands who have since broken into the rock mainstream.

Guy doesn't just spin tracks – his commitment to really get behind bands and give them concerted attention over time is an important factor in helping to get bands noticed. Here the interplay of an engaging radio show with in-depth feature hour interviews combine well to give music fans the chance to really get under the skin of a band or artist.