

DAMIR SIMIC SHIME - CROATIAN GUITAR HERO

by David Konow

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You think you've heard one shred guitar album you've heard 'em all, but the newest album from **Damir Simic Shime**, *Tone Addict*, demands your attention. Instead of blurring into the background, Shime plays licks that perk up your ears and - perhaps just as importantly - he makes you want to pick up *your own guitar* and start practicing.

In *Guitar World* magazine, ubershredder **Yngwie Malmsteen** recalled his journey to America, a country he called "truly the land of opportunity." He came off the plane with a guitar, an extra pair of pants and a dream, and since his breakthrough many other European guitarists have come over hoping to follow in his footsteps.

Although not as successful as **Malmsteen**, **Shime** has accomplished a great deal since coming over from Croatia in 1991, and he has even more dreams he hopes to transform into reality. "The way I look at my whole American quest, to me it's just one big adventure," he says. "It's still an adventure to me. I've accomplished some things, I didn't accomplish some things I wanted to, but the adventure still exists."

As a kid growing up in Croatia, **Simic's** first major guitar hero was **Ritchie Blackmore**, and like countless other guitar hopefuls, it wasn't long before he fell under the spell of **Van Halen**. It's easy to take for granted how accessible everything is in America, especially in the internet age - just try and imagine having to cross the border into another country just to buy an album.

"Growing up in a Socialist regime at the time, it was very hard to get a hold of any foreign-made music," **Simic** says. "If I wanted to buy anything cool like Van Halen I had to figure out how to travel to Italy or to Austria. At that time you couldn't get it through the mail - that wasn't really developed yet."

Simic would also have to travel to Italy and Austria just to buy accessories like picks and strings. Thankfully, his father was working in Germany. He was not only able to buy his son albums, but also his first good guitar and amp combination.

http://www.madeloud.com/article/damir_simic_shime

Still, like a lot of parents, **Simic's** mother had a hard time understanding her son's rock ambitions. But **Simic** had his own reasons for pursuing a musician's lifestyle - "One day when I am old before I die I want to look back on my life and know I at least tried it. If I don't try, I'm gonna be a miserable fuck; I'm gonna die in agony. That's the inner driving force I had, fuck everything, I just gotta go here and try."

"It was a really far-fetched idea, because for any 22 year old to move to L.A., even if you're from Wisconsin, it's a big step in your life," **Simic** says now. "Especially in a country like where I was growing up, it was almost like saying, 'Hey dude, I'm gonna move to the moon.'"

Simic saved up as much money as he could, and was finally able to come over on a Visa for the summer program at GIT, the L.A. music school that spawned many shred guitarists. Once he arrived in America in June 1991, he was featured in both *Guitar Player* and *Guitar For the Practicing Musician*, signed a publishing deal with Warner Chapel Music, and secured several endorsement deals. "Everything appeared to be phenomenal right from the get go," **Simic** recalls.

With **Metallica's** "black album" and **Guns N Roses' Use Your Illusions I and II** released that summer, the future still looked very promising for metal and hard rock...until Seattle dropped the other shoe. "We didn't really see it coming," **Simic** says. "I understand the concept of music becoming too generic and corporate, but at the same time there were many, many great bands that didn't deserve to be beheaded overnight."

Still, **Simic** knew the shred market was limited to begin with, and like a lot of musicians, he was going to do it no matter what. "If I was doing this for monetary reasons, I would have given up a long time ago," he says. "I do this because I love doing this. I don't have a choice; I have to do it."

Thankfully, the cycle for great guitar playing came back around again, thanks in part to the "Guitar Hero" video game. "It was dark times for solo guitar players, and it truly lasted until 2004-05," **Simic** says. "The past three, four years I'm seeing this movement where all these young bands are coming along, they're starting to shred, and it's becoming more popular again."

A lot of shredders hoped for a big gig playing for someone like **Ozzy**, but **Shime** likes doing his own thing. "I'm the happiest guy playing my own shit," he says. "Some people may say that's my ego speaking, and I say, 'Hey man, I play solo guitar, I play solo instrumental music, ego is kind of a given! (laughs).' I do like the attention, but I don't play because I need attention. I play because I'm passionate and addicted to guitar."

Shred has always been an underground kind of phenomenon because the audience is smaller, players make their reputations through word of mouth and tape trading, and most artists have either signed up with the indie shred label Shrapnel or have released their music themselves. "Shred has a very faithful following," **Simic** says. "The fans are very dedicated to the players they like."

Shime has just completed two videos for his new album which he directed and edited himself. "I'm doing everything more than what I'm supposed to do, which is play my music," **Simic** says. "I'm kind of a jack of all trades. I have to worry about every thing that revolves around playing this kind of music. It's kind of excruciating and hard when you do it yourself, and whatever monetary expenses come out of my pocket. Sometimes I feel like Don Quixote fighting the windmills."

Looking back on his journey so far, **Shime** says he's accomplished a lot of his childhood dreams, but hasn't accomplished his main dream yet. "I came here because I wanted to be one of the boys, one of the guys who left some considerable impact on the guitar," he says. He still hopes to be an inspiration to anyone in Croatia hoping to break out, and would love to play on **Joe Satriani's** G3 tour, where three hot guitar players all tour around the country together. "It's America!," **Shime** says hopefully. "Things happen!"