

[Guitar Hero Means Guitar Zero](#)

Once upon a time, really not very long ago, if you wanted to know what it was like to play guitar you bought a guitar, learnt some chords and got sore fingertips before strumming out that first baby-steps, three or four chord song - usually "Knockin On Heavens Door," "Smoke on the Water" or, if you bought a capo too, "Wonderwall."

Then, as you progressed from strumming chords you could pick out individual strings and when you threw in a D and G you had "Everybody Hurts" and as the skill builds up you could tackle those songs that would make your wrist fall off with practice such as the circus like riff that opens "Sweet Child Of Mine." With every Nirvana riff nailed a feeling of satisfaction would emerge and you'd become braver, tackling more complex sounding tracks such as Jane's Addiction's "Just Because" before your confidence was up enough to play with other guitar bashers - or, in technical terms: musicians - and learn more.

At least, that's how I did it.

Not anymore though. This thing called Guitar Hero traversed its way from Japanese arcades to shop shelves. A miniature, plastic little guitar shaped controller with colour coded buttons in place of frets. No need to learn actual chords and riffs when you can push coloured buttons, as prompted along to guitar classics. Then there's sequels and dedicated editions. Not to mention being able to hook it up with your mates games and have face-offs. If only you could do such things with REAL guitars.

Then there's Rock BAND - to give you all the fun of being in a real band without any of that troublesome stuff of say, buying instruments, learning instruments, learning and writing songs and.. creating. Oh no, who needs that when you can spend upwards of 70 quid on a fake guitar or drumkit which, by the way, you look really cool playing, and PRETEND?! Wow, with one person singing, one person pushing buttons pretending to play guitar and another hitting colour coded drum pads it's almost like you're in a band! Wow.

Let me illustrate how I see this in terms of the devolution of music: imagine you're walking down the street. You walk past a house and the garage door is open, inside a drummer twirling the bolts on top of the symbols and setting up while two kids churn out guitar chords and lanky kid with a bass (they're always the lanky ones) tunes up. Two minutes later they're in the middle of a slightly loose and ever so slightly out of tune cover of "Love Buzz." It's not great but they're getting there and in a few months they'll be playing it in front of people and calling themselves something like Plastic Glass and people will be jumping up and down. Teenage girls will be adoring them and soon they'll be writing their own tunes and maybe, this is just a maybe mind as the record industry is in a scary state, they might even get to make an album.

Keep walking down the metaphorical street.

Now you come to a house with no net curtains, you can see straight through the window. Inside there's a large tv and around it three young adults, one of them has what looks like a microphone in his hand, another has something resembling a stratocaster (it even says Fender on the headstock but you can't see that from the street) and the other is sat behind what looks like half a drumkit but somehow.. not quite right. Then as images appear on the screen they start what looks like a game of make believe and dance around as if they're pretending to be the band that made the music on the game. Never mind they didn't write it, never mind that they don't know how to really play but they are going to pretend they did. After three and a half excruciating minutes of watching these people pretend (just be grateful the kids in this house aren't into it enough to dress up too) they do a little excited jump - perhaps even a little chest bump - and celebrate the fact that they got enough points to unlock another song they can pretend to play.

Now if people continue to do this instead copying songs at the first place you stopped how will music get made? Where will the soundtracks for your Make Pretend Game come from?! If you ask me, the only difference between Rock Band/ Guitar Hero and the old Harry Enfield sketch of Tim Nice-But Dim rocking out with his tennis racket to Dire Strait's "Sultans of Swing" is that his racket wasn't actually shaped like a little plastic guitar and could do something useful like play tennis.

It's getting so bad that bands are actually releasing their songs ONLY via these games.

So yeah, if you wanna know what it's like to be a gangster and blow things up then by all means by a game. And yes it may be fun and quicker than actually learning but if you want to know what it's really like to play guitar, buy one. You can pick them up cheap enough to start learning on - easily as cheap as buying the game and controllers. If you want to get the rock band experience find a couple of friends that play instruments - not toy ones - and play with them. Trust me, it's the most fun you'll have.

About the Author

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