

When I hear the words "Guitar Hero" I don't immediately think of a difficult, sometimes band-specific video game that is making millions off the understanding of a popular human axiom: Most of us want to rock. Literally.

I still give credence to wanting to rock, and even though I'm a little out of the loop as far as popular culture goes, I still say my idea of "Guitar Hero" will (literally) rock you more than a video game. These words conjure up images, of, well, my number one GUITAR HERO:

[pause for effect here]:

TRACII GUNS.

Say what you will about a band that can boast two different line-ups and 15+ members over the years, but make no mistake, there is only ONE Tracii Guns.

Hearing that LA GUNS was coming through Raleigh, NC via rock club Volume 11 on July 17th I knew I was going. It didn't matter that I had blown most of my cash flow at Rocklahoma [a 5-day 80s hair metal music festival in Pryor, Oklahoma], where I'd just seen LA GUNS play the week before. Call me decadent, but I wanted to see Tracii Guns play in a more intimate setting. Shit...I just wanted to see Tracii Guns play.



I found the club without much trouble, paid my way in and squeezed into a corner of the bar, closest to the bathrooms. I heard a cover of "Bark at the Moon" blaring from the stage as I admired the Black Sabbath album cover and Helmet poster adorning a part of the walls.



I got a beer and mingled a bit with my rock and roll brethren. When I heard the word that La Guns was to take the stage next, I took my cue and made my way to the front of the stage.

I turned to see the guy behind me clutching an LA GUNS shirt circa 1989. I leaned in and said, "Man, if I could be a Wonder Twin right now, I'd take the form of Tracii Guns' guitar." He smiled and nodded. I knew he'd seen Tracii play before.

Then...Lights...Drums...(Yes!!! Here it comes!!!!) GUITAR!!! Ahhhhhh!!! The opening riff to "Over the Edge", one of my favorite and least played LA GUNS songs. EVER. YES!!!!!!

My audience mate and I did The Wonder Twin Knuckle Knock as if we might actually be able to take the shape of that guitar.

Believe me, there is a magic in the air when Tracii plays, and even though I wasn't going to be the guitar, I was certainly going to experience the next best thing: being in the same room as Tracii when he's playing it.

Of course live music is always some sort of feast for the ears and eyes, but watching Tracii goes one step further and satisfies even the tactile sense. Yes, Rockers, when this dude plays, you can **FEEL** it.

His unique combination of talent and soulful facial expressions (hands-down, the most sincere I've ever seen) contribute to things emanating from Tracii's guitar that are not contingent on where his fingers are on the fret board.

Tracii Guns, is in fact, the incarnation of his own song "Electric Gypsy". I know the song is an ode to motorcycles and rock n roll and traveling, but, to me, the lyrics are a description of a live Tracii Guns.



Listen:

"Round, round, up and down/Move so fast, never touch the ground/
High, high, touch the sky/Don't come down don't make me try"

"Gotta keep moving/Gotta let go."

"Get in my spaceship and watch me fly."



Tracii does get in his spaceship and because his playing is so powerful, he really does take you with him. Those notes all meld together and seep into that deeper part of us that loves music and validates it.

If my soul had an expression when I hear music, it would look like Tracii Guns when he's playing guitar.

But, don't take my word for it. Go see the Electric Gypsy himself with LA GUNS on tour this summer. The set list is quite eclectic. I don't want to give it all away, but there's some vintage LA GUNS along with a few surprises. During one song, Tracii

actually sat down on the stage to play. I felt like I was standing around a campfire with hundreds of people!!! Most awesome. Go, go, go! You won't regret it.

For tour dates, see www.myspace.com/traciigunsmusic

- Maria McKinney

