



FINGERSTYLE
S U M M I T

JON GOMM

KEY INSIGHTS

Ibanez

 **KLOTZ**
interfaces

 **D'Addario**

INTRO

Tell us more about yourself.

- He doesn't consider himself a fingerstyle guitarist since he sometimes use a plectrum.
- He thinks of himself more as a singer-songwriter.
- He prefers to call himself a progressive acoustic guitarist.
- He's different from others because he sings - most do not.

When and how did you start your musical journey?

- He started when he was very young, which he didn't like to tell people because it frightens them - he doesn't want his older audiences to think it's too late.
- He began taking lessons when he was four years old.
- He used to teach guitar which he really misses doing.
- He said the best students are the older ones - those in their 40's, 50's. Although it was harder to get their fingers working compared to kids, it was the older people who learned the fastest and fun to teach because they already knew everything - he just had to explain stuff.
- He learned blues, rock and roots from his dad.
- He went to The Guitar Institute to learn different styles, then went to college to study jazz.
- Compared to the younger guys who mostly learned playing from Youtube, he says the 'older' guys like him have a much broader kind of musical background because they had to search around more.

Who are the guitarists that inspired you to do this style of playing?

- Jimi Hendrix, Joe Satriani and Steve Vai inspired him early in his career.
- Joe Satriani
- Tobias Rauscher
- He tried to be Stanley Jordan for one summer until he realized it's impossible.
- Charlie Hunter - a jazz player who plays eight-string guitar finger style.
- Jonny Greenwood from Radiohead
- Tom Morello of Rage Against the Machine who he says made very weird noises with the guitar that he never got to figure out for himself.
- Nick Harper - a British singer-songwriter whose tuning and approach to the instrument, he says, influenced his way of playing very much.
- Michael Hedges

GUITARS & GEAR

Please tell me about your guitars, how do you get your unique sound?

- He does modifications to his guitar.
- He changes the fret height and fret material which he says is “A really big deal”.
- He changes the guitar bracing to support the percussive side of things.

Which strings and gauge do you prefer?

- He uses “very, very heavy strings”.
- He uses his own Jon Gomm signature strings, which is a gauge 14-68 set.
- This string set need to be tuned lower than normal

Let’s talk nails, what do your nails look like?

- He keeps it ‘organic’ - he barely grows his nails.
- Because of his classical background, he keeps the shape of his nails the same way he had them when he played classical. The shape is the same, but the length is shorter.
- He shares having compared his nails to Mike Dawes’s. Because Mike has longer nails, he can perform techniques that Petteri can’t - techniques such as harmonics and others that involves the use of nails. On the other hand, Petteri does percussive stuff better than Mike because his nails don’t get in the way.
- On one recent occasion, though, where he got to consciously file his nails to play some classical in a recording studio, he was surprised how much sound quality one could get out of a properly polished nail regardless of length.

Which pickup system do you use to get the best possible sound?

- He uses a combination of pickups.
- A Fishman Rare Earth Blend, which he says is very, very old and has no treble left.
- A little Fishman condenser microphone which is attached to the above.
- A Carlos Juan CS sensor, which “gives the most incredible drum sounds you can possibly imagine”. One NEEDS to have some technical knowledge to use this - Know signal must be carefully compressed to control its sound output.
- He said there are other pickups inside his guitar which were not connected at the time of the interview.

GUITARS & GEAR

Let's talk nails, what do your nails look like?

- He doesn't have grown nails on his four right-hand fingers because he does a lot of tapping.
- He grows his thumb nails a bit and uses acrylic on it.
- He doesn't like the sound of nails on steel strings.

Which pickup system do you use to get the best possible sound?

- While he has been known for having made the Boss OC-3 a famous pedal, he recently switched to his new favorite - the Zoom MultiStomp.
- He loves the Zoom MultiStomp for being relatively cheap while having copies of all the famous sounds inside one panel. It's fun to use. He would not recommend it for recording as the sound quality is not good enough, but it sounds really spectacular for live events.

Is there any other special gear or gadgets you're using?

- He uses band-locking banjo pegs which allows him to play whatever note he wants while tapping. This way he can perform melodies that he can never get any other way.
- He doesn't use a preamp. He warns that it will almost always make your sound worse. If you are using an active pickup, you don't need the extra gain that you get from a preamp.
- MOTU UltraLite mixer which he can attach to a WiFi router. This allows him to control his mix of his pickups from his phone.
- He advises against using Boss products. He mentions that because these devices automatically prevent you from sounding 'bad', you won't know when you're already pushing things too hard.

Could you give some advice for when it comes to buying a new guitar?

- He has signature guitars available made by Lowden Guitars.
- He suggests Michael Greenfield Guitars and Nick Benjamins.

SONGWRITING

How do you write songs - what are the stages?

- His most important advice: When he writes a song, the whole song is pretty much finished before he picks up his guitar.
- The song already existed. All of the guitar playing is just the icing on the cake.
- Take a little idea and put it in a completely different context. Found a guitar riff that lasts for five seconds, but you think it's the coolest thing ever? It's okay to steal it.
- Most of his compositions (e.g. Passion Flower) rotate on the Lydian mode because loves that sound.
- He mentions a compositional technique by Joe Satriani - the Pitch Axis. The theory behind it is that if you take any two, three or any series of chords, they will always work together if they have at least one similar note.

RECORDING

How do you record your music?

- It varies all the time. Sometimes he records it at home, sometimes in a studio. Sometimes all the way through, sometimes in parts.
- Recently he's been recording using clicks to keep everything in rhythm.
- To him, the most important thing about recording is to be able to get a sound that is your sound.
- A microphone doesn't have to be expensive. It has to be something you like. Jon uses a 150-Euro mic that according to him, makes him sound much better than more expensive ones can.

What about the tunings you use, any favorites?

- Almost every song that he plays is in a different tuning. He doesn't have a favorite tuning.
- At the time of the interview, he has his guitar tuned in C G D G A D.
- He sometimes uses D A D G A D and Open D (D A D F# A D) which is the tuning for his song Wukan Motorcycle Kid.
- He's conscious of the fact that he has to do a different tuning when performing live. When that happens, he makes sure to avoid really big tuning changes.
- He thinks that being able to change the tuning all the time is what makes fingerstyle guitar interesting.

PLAYING LIVE

What is your best advice for a great live performance?

- You don't have to entertain if you're not that guy.
Jon realized he is not that kind of guy.
- Unlike comedians, guitarists don't need to get the whoops and cheers all the time - the deepest emotional connection with an audience can be really quiet sometimes.
- "Be yourself" doesn't mean much. You have to figure out what you are not. By figuring out what you don't like, what doesn't feel right and what you're not very good at, then you'll figure out who you are and then you can be yourself.

Do you have stage fright? How do you prepare and warm up before a show?

- Feeling of nerves is a physical thing. It is just a build up of adrenaline and stress in your body.
- He used to do meditation before he went on stage but figured it doesn't work when you're in a state of stress.
- The best thing you can do is run upstairs two to three times to make the adrenaline die down.
- Once you've physically expressed the adrenaline and stress, you can start doing things that you enjoy. Only then does he find benefit in doing meditation.

GROWING A FANBASE

Let's talk about music marketing and how people can grow a fanbase nowadays.

- He grew his audience by mainly touring a lot and playing a lot of gigs.
- If you want to make a Facebook viral video, you're probably going to need to create something that is visually extraordinary. Even then, none of that is going to help you make good music.
- If you want to be a musician and write songs and compose music, stick to that.
- You need to build the audience with the quality of your music. "Really, that's the best way".

LESSONS

How to get the most out of your practice routine / How to practice efficiently to become a great guitarist?

- Everyday he'll just play scales. Often not even scales, just tapping sequences that he 'likes'.
- He advocates for the mindful way of learning. He would do that by watching his left hand as he plays through a whole piece then do it again by watching the other hand.
- He would slow down his tunes to half speed with a metronome. This is really hard to do but he is doing it for two reasons. One is that it prevents you from going autopilot. The other one is that it will help you notice the groove in a much deeper way. It will help you feel in control of the tempo as a result.
- He performs exercises which he got from Joe Satriani and other guitar players of the 90s.
- He uses a legato technique which he calls a 'weird pretend scale'. It is a series of hammer-ons and pull offs that goes 1-2-4 on the frets, followed by a 1-2-3 and so on.

What are the most significant parts of your playing and your style? (It would be great, if you could give us a playing example of this kind of a "signature riff" of yours).

- Jon performed a riff which he says he uses in most of his songs because easy to play.
- It can be performed without using any finger - the thumbs are used to tap on the strings.
- The riff is in C tuning (CGDGAD) although you can use DADGAD or any kind of tuning with a fifth in the bass.
- The left hand starts with a bass hammer, followed by a three harmonic slumps in the 8th note and then two 16th notes. Repeat the bass notes or replace with another bass note.
- Then he adds some drums. He uses his forearm as kick drum to sound at the same time as the bass note.
- The whole riff consists of a kick, the bass, the harmonics, the drum, another bass that just is left to hang, then a Bongo sound using the right hand around the top of the guitar, and then another Bongo.
- If you play fingerstyle and then you try to add drums in between, it doesn't work that well. He suggest you start with the drums and build the playing around it.

OUTRO

Imagine you'd lose your guitar skills..., knowing what you know now and based on your experience, how would start all over again to become as good as you are now within a few years if possible?

- He would just quit and do something else.
- Jon shared life lessons like music not being a means to prove yourself to the world. That music is not for you - it's for other people.
- Once you've written a piece of music and then it exists on the internet, remove it from yourself. That is not you, that's the music. So when people say it's bad or good, that doesn't say anything about you. Just the music.

Where can viewers go to learn more about you?

- He has a website called JonGomm.com where he shares some instructional videos on percussive guitar.