

= Guitar Solos =

Guitar Solos is the debut solo album of English guitarist , composer and improviser Fred Frith . It was recorded while Frith was still a member of the English experimental rock group Henry Cow and was released in the United Kingdom on LP record by Caroline Records in October 1974 . The album comprises eight tracks of unaccompanied and improvised experimental rock music played on prepared guitars by Frith without any overdubbing .

Guitar Solos was voted one of the best albums of 1974 by NME critics . AllMusic called it a landmark album because of its innovative and experimental approach to guitar playing . It also attracted the attention of Brian Eno , resulting in Frith 's playing guitar on two of Eno 's albums , and spawned two follow @-@ up albums , Guitar Solos 2 (1976) and Guitar Solos 3 (1979) . Guitar Solos was remastered and released on CD on Frith 's own record label , Fred Records in 2002 .

= = Background = =

Fred Frith was a classically @-@ trained violinist who turned to playing blues guitar while still at school . In 1967 he went to Cambridge University where he and fellow student , Tim Hodgkinson formed Henry Cow . While at University , Frith read John Cage 's Silence : Lectures and Writings , which changed his attitude to music completely . He realised that " sound , in and of itself , can be as important as [...] melody and harmony and rhythm . " This changed his approach to the guitar , " just to see what I could get out of it " and initiated a long period of experimentation that continued throughout Frith 's musical career .

While the music of Henry Cow was highly orchestrated and structured , Frith also began to experiment with unstructured music , using prepared instruments and chance composition . In June 1974 , after the release of Henry Cow 's second album , Virgin Records (Henry Cow 's record label) commissioned a solo record from Frith . They were impressed with his musical ability and gave him free rein to record whatever he wanted . In a 2001 radio interview , Frith said he used the opportunity as a challenge : " I said to myself [...] in two weeks time I 'm going to go into the studio and I have no idea what I 'm going to do and I 'm going to kind of reinvent the instrument for myself . " Frith spent four days in July 1974 recording at the Kaleidophon Studios in London , and the resulting experimentation and the process of galvanisation and pressure led to the " radical approach to the guitar " on the album . In October 1974 , Virgin released the album as Guitar Solos on their budget label , Caroline Records .

= = Recording = =

Frith recorded the album at David Vorhaus 's Kaleidophon Studios in London on 11 ? 13 and 15 July 1974 , where he played a modified 1936 Gibson K @-@ 11 . He added an extra pickup over the strings at the nut , enabling him to amplify sound from both sides of the fretted note . He then split the fretboard in two with a capo , effectively giving him two guitars , each amplified separately that he could play independently with each hand . To split the sounds further he attached alligator clips at various positions on the strings . The net result was a guitar with multiple sound sources that could be channelled to a mixer and distributed across the stereo soundscape .

The album was recorded in four days without any overdubbing . All the pieces were improvised , some completely , some to a roughly preconceived idea , and sound as they were played , except for " No Birds " , which was recorded in two parts , and " Not Forgotten " , from which two notes were removed . The only sounds not produced ' naturally ' by guitar are those of a fuzzbox used on " Out of Their Heads (On Locoweed) " , " Heat c / w Moment " and " No Birds " , an echo delay used on " No Birds " , and ambient noise from Frith 's breath and feet on " Heat c / w Moment " .

On the longest track on the album , " No Birds " , Frith played on two prepared guitars simultaneously , creating the timbre and range of an orchestra . He laid the two guitars flat on a table , neck to neck with the bodies of the guitars at opposite ends and the necks parallel to each other . He tuned the strings on both guitars to one note , and because they were stereo guitars with

nut pickups , he had six separate sound sources coming from each guitar . Using volume pedals on some of the sound sources , he filtered sounds in and out of the mix without doing anything on the guitars .

= = Reception and influence = =

Guitar Solos was voted one of the best albums of 1974 by NME critics . Sean Westergaard of AllMusic called Guitar Solos a landmark album because of its innovative and experimental approach to guitar playing . Radio journalist Chris Comer said it was a " ground breaking guitar improvisation record . " In the January 1983 edition of Down Beat magazine , Bill Milkowski wrote that on Guitar Solos " Frith unveiled a haunting collection of improvised music on prepared guitar which must have stunned listeners of the day . Even today that album stands up as uniquely innovative and undeniably daring . " The album also attracted the attention of Brian Eno who was " excited by the timbral possibilities that [Frith had] been discovering . " Eno asked Frith to record with him , and this resulted in Frith playing guitar on two of Eno 's albums , Before and After Science (1977) and Music for Films (1978) .

The table @-@ top guitar setup Frith used on this album became a standard for many of his subsequent live solo performances , including those recorded on his 1982 live double album Live in Japan . He later extended his technique to include " found objects " , which he used on his guitars to extract new sounds .

The success of Guitar Solos spawned two follow @-@ up albums , Guitar Solos 2 (1976) and Guitar Solos 3 (1979) , which featured Frith and other improvising guitarists , including Derek Bailey and Hans Reichel . Frith coordinated and produced these albums , and employed many of the same " unorthodox techniques " he had used on Guitar Solos . When a remastered edition of the original Guitar Solos was released 28 years later on Frith 's own Fred Records label , it attracted further praise from critics . Westergaard wrote that " Guitar Solos ' lasting legacy is that it radically redefined the way some people think about the guitar . "

= = Track listing = =

All tracks written by Fred Frith .

= = = Original 1974 release = = =

= = = 1991 CD re @-@ issue bonus tracks = = =

= = = Track notes = = =

Tracks 9 ? 10 were recorded on Tom Newman 's barge (Argonaut Studio) in January 1976 , and were originally released on the follow @-@ up album , Guitar Solos 2 (1976) .

Tracks 11 ? 13 were recorded at Briollay , France , in October 1978 , and were originally released on the follow @-@ up album , Guitar Solos 3 (1979) .

Tracks 14 ? 18 were recorded at Noise , New York City , in September 1988 , and were previously unreleased .

= = Personnel = =

Fred Frith ? prepared guitars

= = = Production = = =

David Vorhaus ? recording engineer
Ray Smith ? album sleeve photography and design

= = CD re @-@ issues = =

In 1991 RecRec Music (Switzerland) and East Side Digital (United States) re @-@ issued Guitar Solos on CD comprising all the tracks from the original Guitar Solos LP , plus the Fred Frith tracks from the follow @-@ up albums , Guitar Solos 2 and Guitar Solos 3 , along with five previously unreleased tracks by Frith .

In 2002 Fred Records issued a remastered version of the original Guitar Solos LP with no extra tracks .