

Top 5 - Guitarists with distinct sounds

I've always been a big fan of distinctive sound in music. This doesn't just mean tonality, but in fact the entire texture of the music including the tone, rhythm and the emotion and feel that it brings as a listener. Because I'm a guitarist myself I will obviously tend toward that part of it. That said, I also play drums and can reasonably play bass or at least play a bass like a 4 string guitar.

Personal influence will be a part of any top pick list so some may agree or disagree with my own top 5 here. My choices were made based on the fact that these guitarists are both stylistically and sonically original. By that I mean that their style and sound can be picked out fairly easily; especially to long time fans and most definitely to musicians.

I've left off the rather obvious names that are typically found on these lists like Eddie Van Halen, Eric Clapton, Jimmy Page and the like. This is less about having a massive

5. Jerry Cantrell

Jerry has honed his playing into the tonally and rhythmically distinct style that became the fingerprint of the Alice In Chains sound. It might even be said that it was one of, if not *the* most recognizable sound out of the Seattle grunge movement in the early 90s. A frequent user of alternate time signatures, mixed with a bluesy and never plain playing style became the inspiration of many guitarists over the last 20 years.

Combined with this distinct style is his moving vocals and powerful lyrical and musical writing, he is truly a triple threat in the rock/alt rock world. Having come out of the peak popularity in the 90s and continued a successful career since, many still regard him as a past and still current influence.

4. Billy Corgan

Another powerful figure of the 90s who has also proven his durability and influence. As the leader, head writer and arguably the entire personality behind the Smashing Pumpkins, his original and broad style stands out among the crowd. From the raw, emotional, melodic, deep textures to the phrenetic soloing style, Billy's songs draw you in and penetrate your soul. Ok, maybe not quite that deep, but they are pretty amazing if you ask me.

By incorporating feedback and layers and, the guitar sound wraps around you like a blanket and takes you in so many directions. For anyone who didn't think that Billy was the center of the band, it is made obvious by the fact that 3 different iterations of the band with wholly different lineups still holds the same Pumpkins sound that he brought us back in 1991 with Gish and on every album since.

3. Jagori Tanna

I may have caught you off guard with this one, but whether you know the name or not, you will know his sound from song to song. Jag Tanna and his brother Christian founded I Mother Earth. As you've guessed from my classic Gen-X influence, they came out in the 90s. Jag plays in a mixture of the flowing, Santana-esque style with the deeply emotional bluesy edge of a Stevie Ray Vaughan.

The worldly styles of the band and the lockstep rhythms between the Tanna brothers makes your

heart beat along with them as they rock the stage and studio as if they were one in the same. Not only was Jag primary writer and guitarist, but also produced the band and continued to produce other bands throughout the coming years.

2. Adam Jones

The next guitarist may not be a household name, but for anyone who has listened to the powerful sounds of Tool, they will know the deep, dark and signature sounds of Adam Jones. The depth of Adam's tone speaks volumes, and the rhythms weaved around the phenomenal musicianship of his bandmates tie in perfectly with the haunting vocals of Maynard James Keenan.

1. Zakk Wylde

If you are a fan of hard rock and you don't live in a cave, you know Zakk Wylde. The axe man behind Ozzy Osbourne from 1998-2007 as well as the heart and soul of Black Label Society and Pride and Glory, Zakk's inimitable style and sound is a beacon for hard rock and metal guitarists everywhere.

Combining his rockabilly roots with the spine shaking heaviness has been the trademark of this amazing musician. I recall a story from an early interview where Zakk was invited to play with Ozzy and given a rack of exotic processors and gear to only put it aside for the simple rig which is mostly comprised of his Gibson Les Paul and a classic Marshall tube stack. Regardless of where you hear him play, his sound stands out to me as a favourite distinct and unique sound.

So that is my personal top 5. What is yours? I'd love to see your comments and hear about what makes your favourite stand out for you.