

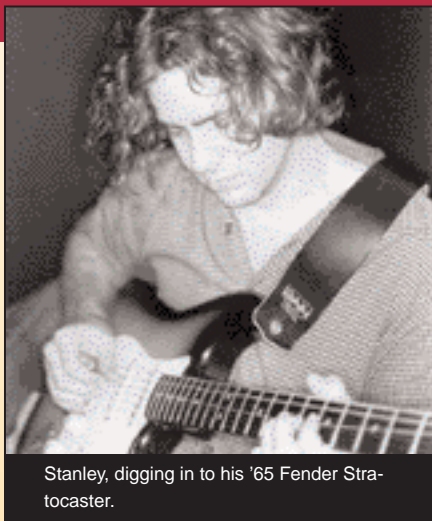
CHOPS

HOT GUITARIST ALERT!

Name: Mark Stanley

Home

Base: Brookeville, Maryland



Stanley, digging in to his '65 Fender Stratocaster.

THERE'S A GREAT GUITARIST LIVING IN A garage in his mom's backyard in Brookeville, Maryland. His name is Mark Stanley, and his is not your average garage. "It's a 1,500-square-foot recording studio," says Stanley. "I've got a baby grand piano in there, as well as a Fender Rhodes, Samplitude, an Alesis HD24 recorder, a 2" 16-track Studer tape machine, Pro Tools, and guitar amps galore. Shawn Lane was actually supposed to record his next record here."

Nor, for that matter, is Stanley your average guitarist. "I wake up and practice jazz for four hours every day," says Stanley, a self-confessed "practice-head" who is a graduate of New York

University's Jazz Studies program, as well as a part-time real estate investor. "Then, I do two hours of country followed by two hours of classical. Next, maybe I'll work out, and, if I don't have anything else going on, I'll practice more at night as well."

Stanley's insane regimen certainly has yielded extraordinary guitar chops, but it's not his stunning technique that makes him interesting. It's his imaginative *music*, a wacky morphing of genres that is best represented by *Meadow Full of Serpents* [Sir Eel], his new album with the warped, sci-fi fusion trio Farquhar. The album makes the average Frank Zappa record sound as straight ahead as an Air Supply greatest hits compilation.

"I like outsider music," proclaims Stanley, who also likes outside *lines*—that is, angular, irreverent riffs that assault the boundaries of conventional harmony with passion and humor. And, believe it or not, though his list of musical heroes includes such melodic "outsiders" as Allan Holdsworth and saxophonist Eric Dolphy, it's Stanley's country side that helps him execute many of his most mutated licks. "Check this out: Here's a *G* major line [Ex. 1] that you can play a number of different ways. You *could*, for example, pick every note, metal-style. Or, you could play the notes legato, where you'd pick, at most, one note per string and slur the rest. But I like to play them the way Hank Garland might play it—picking half the notes and

plucking every *other* note with my middle finger [*m*]. It has a great sound, especially for jazz."

This hybrid pick/pluck attack also gives Stanley great *speed*, especially with lines that cross strings, such as the diminished maneuver in **Ex. 2**. This line never tags the note *A* but, over an *A* bass note or chord, it implies an *A7b9* harmony. You can resolve this run to *D* or *Dm*. "This sounds like redneck Holdsworth to me," says Stanley.

Each picked note is followed by a hammered pitch on the same string, and then by notes that are plucked successively on the next two strings using the picking hand's middle and ring fingers (*m* and *a*, respectively). Pushing this approach to the extreme, Stanley sometimes even plucks notes with his picking-hand pinky (*c*), as demonstrated by the four-note flurries of notes that he loops in **Examples 3a** and **3b**. You may hear Stanley launch these melodic sorties from time to time in some of his faster, wilder improvisations, using Ex. 3a for more dissonant descents, and Ex. 3b for laser-fast descending fifths and fourths.

"At one time I had a producer who tried to normalize me," recalls Stanley, who was once offered a record deal by Warner Bros./Sire records, "but I really didn't like being told what to do. I've realized that being proud of myself—and being very honest with what I'm trying to get across musically—is my main goal. Frank Zappa is a huge influence in that regard, because he was so prolific, yet never worried much about being commercial or selling tons of records." —JUDE GOLD

You can also hear Mark Stanley on *Insect Warriors*, which features powerhouse drummer Dennis Chambers. Check it out online at markstanley.net or sireelrecords.com.

Ex. 1
à la Hank Garland
♩ = 100-132
G

Ex. 2
Wildly
♩ = 100-150 A7b9