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Riffer madness

Some air guitarists take their invisible act plucking seriously

Mar 16, 2007 04:30 AM

RAJU MUDHAR
STAFF REPORTER

Dan Crane can windmill like Pete Townsend. He can pogo around a stage like the best punk without worrying about missing a note. He can work a fret board like AC/DC's Angus Young and then smash his guitar with the best of them.

Of course, he's always ready for the next performance, because all he needs to do is think up a replacement instrument.

Crane, 36, is Björn Türoque – one of the world's foremost air guitarists.

The New Yorker is featured in *Air Guitar Nation*, a new documentary that opens next Friday.

The film features Crane in performance, weaving around the stage, rocking out with abandon, sweating through his trademark headband and rock T-shirt with torn-off sleeves.

His is a story of perseverance – despite some setbacks, he never gave up on his air guitar wizardry, continually entering competitions, often paying his own way to compete in other regional contests when he didn't advance.

"Yeah, I've been called the Susan Lucci of air guitar," he jokes, referring to the perennial also-ran of Daytime Emmys. "Or the Avis – I try harder," he says while sitting in a Queen W. restaurant yesterday.

Although retired as an air guitarist, he's picked up his invisible axe to do promotion for *Air Guitar Nation*.

"In 2005, I won first place in New York, finally. And then I went to L.A. (for the U.S. championships) and came in second place, again. That was my fifth time in second place. And I actually did go to Finland one more time as a dark horse ... and after that, I hung 'em up."

Oulu, Finland is the home of the World Air Guitar Championships.

Crane has competed there twice against the best air guitarists in the world. *Air Guitar Nation* chronicles the 2003 competition – the first year American organizers Kriston Rucker and Cedric Devitt devised the series of regional competitions that crowned the first U.S. air guitar champion.

"At first, I got involved because I knew Cedric. He went to Finland in 2002 ... and he ended up competing as Air Lingus and came in fourth," says Crane. "When he came back he told all these crazy stories about getting drunk with all these crazy people in Finland, and I was like I can do that. I bet I could do a pretty good air guitar."

He had no idea the obsession it would unleash. He's chronicled his air guitar hits and misses in a book, *To Air is Human: One Man's Quest to Become the World's Greatest Air Guitarist*.

He also happens to be in a real band called Nous Non Plus (which he describes as "a fake French band from NYC" and yes, he really does play the guitar) that recently played Paris, and just got invited back for a music festival.

Besides being one of the doc's stars, Crane scored the movie. And as one of America's foremost experts on air guitar he offers some tips for air heirs.

"Meditation, drinking and volume – your invisible instrument must be at maximum volume," he says. "You have to find a song that not only speaks to you and makes you want to rock but a song that you can really crawl inside the notes, live there for a while. Take up residence. If there was a magic formula, I would have used it."

Air musicians take the whole thing very seriously.

"There's certain people that did have a seriousness that kind of goes beyond, where they kind of don't get that it's for fun," he says.

"I mean, while I say that, I practised. In 2005, a friend of mine made me a custom spandex outfit; it's the one on the posters. I had dry ice in my sleeves, making tiny puffs of smoke.

"There's dedication involved and you have to take it seriously, but it's supposed to have an edge of humour to it."



TARA WALTON/TORONTO STAR
Dan Crane, aka Björn Türoque, shows off some signature moves.

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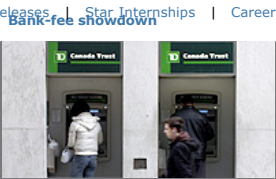
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