



# Geek to Guitar Hero

By Alex Skolnick

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## Geek to Guitar Hero By Alex Skolnick

Alex is an awkward, introverted child growing up in 1970s Berkeley, California – a confusing vortex of shifting values, rampant drug use and social confusion. Misunderstood by his family and taunted mercilessly by classmates, he suffers from a paralyzing lack of confidence and low self-esteem. His existence is made tolerable when he discovers a superhero-like rock band, KISS, which inspires him to learn the guitar. While in high school, he auditions for Legacy – a group of hard partying, working class, twenty-something metalheads from the East Bay suburbs. After recording his first album with the group at age eighteen, he defies his Ivy League parents' rigid academic expectations by forgoing college and hitting the road with metal bands including Slayer, Megadeth, White Zombie and Judas Priest. As his own band, now known as Testament, rises through the ranks of thrash metal, the world begins to take notice of the young guitar prodigy who, despite being fawned over by autograph-seeking metalheads, guitar fanatics and adoring female fans, still feels the pain, awkwardness and ghosts of his past. Soon, a blooming interest in jazz and literature reshapes his values and strengthens his musicianship, bringing further accolades from fans and media but causing resistance and tension from within his inner circle. These experiences cause a realization to unfold: that the scene in which he had first sought his freedom and self-identity is fraught with its own perilous limitations, while the education he'd so fiercely resisted from his family can be invaluable when sought on one's own terms.

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## Geek to Guitar Hero By Alex Skolnick Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

...Alex Skolnick became the lead guitarist of thrash metal band Testament at age 16. He was the band's youngest member, and by the time he was 18, they had their first record deal. By age 19, he was touring the world. Today, naturally, he fronts a titular jazz trio. He tells the wild tales of his transition to jazz in his new biography, *Geek to Guitar Hero*, which he wrote without a co-author...About the book's title: Onstage, Skolnick shreds with confidence. Offstage, he has struggled his whole life with feeling out of place and socially awkward. Alex Skolnick, revered the world over as one of the greatest living guitar players, is painfully shy...There might be writers who look at a guitarist who writes his own book with a jaundiced eye. However, Skolnick's words are eloquent and insightful and frequently entertaining. *Geek* is an engaging read, and, in the context of the author's dutiful, DIY personality, it makes a whole hell of a lot of sense that he chose not to use a co-writer. The story is his, after all. And for someone who has battled insecurities for as long as he can remember, it's fearless. --The Village Voice, December 19-25, 2012

If every child of sixties Berkeley Jewish intellectuals quit playing piano after a brief period of frustrating lessons and, deflated by family failures, was deemed never to be a musician, but then turned fate on its ear to end up not just a prodigy metal guitarist but one of the world's most agile rock/jazz virtuosos, Alex Skolnick's memoir wouldn't be the inspiring read that it is. Here is an honest, raw, articulate story of a life whose problems were forged in the crucible of music into something triumphant. --Bradford Morrow

If you come to Alex Skolnick's memoirs simply expecting the thrash-metal version of Motley Crüe's *The Dirt*, you're going to be challenged. Skolnick is a searching, opinionated and fearless thinker. He opens up the Bay Area 80's metal scene, shedding light on Metallica and Megadeth and crystallizing the strange moment when major labels were willing to risk money on burnouts pushing the boundaries of speed. Besides, no one in Crüe to my knowledge ever made love to a woman on a bowling-ball return machine. --Ned Vizzini

#### About the Author

Alex Skolnick is one of the most diverse guitarists of his generation. Best known for the metal band Testament (which he joined at 16), he has gone on to make a mark in jazz (Alex Skolnick trio), world music (Rodrigo Y Gabriela) and more. A devoted writer, he has blogged for *Guitar Player Magazine*, MTV and penned a popular blog, *SkolNotes*. A Berkeley, California native, he relocated to New York City in 1998, enrolling in The New School University and graduating with a BFA in jazz performance. He currently resides in Brooklyn, New York.

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##### Virginia Mack:

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well as knowledge with this book.

**Kirk Mathews:**

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