

Guitar Girls Pose, Men Shred: A Critical Visual Analysis of *Guitar World* and *Guitar Player* Covers

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Abstract

Guitar World has only featured seven women on covers, 1.3 % of the total issues from its forty-three-year run. In guitar trade magazines, women are primarily depicted as groupies or glamour models, while professional female guitarists rarely receive coverage, especially cover features. The hypersexualization and objectification of female guitarists appeals to male consumers, excluding and alienating female audiences. The present study investigates the sexual objectification of female players appearing on the covers of *Guitar World* and *Guitar Player*. The magazine covers show prominent contemporary guitarists, such as Nita Strauss, Sophie Lloyd, St. Vincent, Orianthi, Joan Jett, Susan Tedeschi, Kaki King, and Bonnie Raitt. The goal of this study is to investigate the intensity of sexualization in the cover photos through a feminist critical visual analysis, drawing from objectification theory, Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, and Steve Waksman's conceptualization of the electric guitar as a technophallus. Given the ideological power of magazine covers to communicate social identities, the sexualized representations of female guitarists in guitar magazines reinforce the male-dominated culture of electric guitar. This study thus illustrates how mainstream media constructs visual representations of femininity to disempower women and undermine their credibility and authenticity as professional electric guitarists.

Keywords: electric guitar; feminism; music press; rock culture; sexual objectification