

IS THIS THE BEST FEMALE LEAD GUITARIST IN AMERICA?

Little Steven's Underground Garage favorites The Grip Weeds are known for their fiery brand of psychedelic rock. Though the band are classicists at heart, the exquisitely aggressive lead guitar work featured on their new "How I Won The War" LP doesn't emanate from a traditional source.

When most people hear a virtuosic electric guitar solo, they assume it's being played by a man. It's true that most of the string bending in rock and roll is done by the testosterone set, but there's a woman in New Jersey that puts them all to shame.

"I started playing guitar when I was 12 and was instantly obsessed with it," says Grip Weeds lead guitarist Kristin Pinell. "I constantly searched for other female musicians but there weren't any."

Pinell was a fan of groups such as The Beatles, Byrds and Supremes from an early age, but it was a 1975 double album that inspired her to make the guitar her life's work.

"Hearing Led Zeppelin's Physical Graffiti really did it for me," Pinell said. "Hearing that album as a kid pretty much changed everything."

After studying for a time at the Hartford Conservatory and Berklee College of Music, Pinell put the guitar down for a while.

"Jazz was being pushed during my time at Berklee," Pinell said. "The year I spent there opened my eyes to a lot of world music but as a 17-year-old the music theory and the strict teaching methods really soured me on music for a while."

Pinell says her decision to move to Boston to join an all-girl band was a sink or swim situation.

"I half-heartedly answered an ad placed by a band in Boston called Good Question who were looking for 'The World's Greatest Female Guitar Player'", Pinell said. "I ended up getting the gig with this four-piece that eventually shrunk to a trio, and that's when my playing was truly put to the test. That Boston period was my personal version of The Beatles cutting their teeth in Hamburg."

Following her time with Good Question, Pinell joined celebrated New York Rock band The Rooks. During this time Kurt Reil and his brother and fellow Grip Weed Rick Reil played Pinell some songs that would end up on their first album.

"I was instantly attracted to those songs," Pinell said. "There was no need for me to adjust to the material; it was as if the songs had been written for me. Kurt and I were friends and eventually a couple before I joined the band," Pinell said. "I was a Grip Weeds fan and started sitting in with them and playing on a few of their demos."

"It was never a case of me trying to sneak my girlfriend into the band," Kurt Reil says. "It was an

organic progression that the entire band were in favor of. Kristin was so good the unspoken rule of The Grip Weeds being a boys club just went out the window."

Pinell loves guitarists who know how to elevate the songs they're playing on.

"Jimmy Page, Dave Davies, Marshall Crenshaw and even a rhythm guitarist/songwriter like Matthew Sweet are the types of guitarists who interest me," Pinell said. "Those guys are great at working the guitar into a song."

Much like the Elaine character on "Seinfeld", Pinell is just one of the guys in The Grip Weeds.

"In a musical sense she's an equal or maybe a superior to the rest of us," Reil said. "There was never even a whiff of the Paul & Linda thing. There's no special treatment because she's a woman; she's a musician."

The Grip Weeds music has been featured internationally via the hit CBS drama "Criminal Minds", Little Steven's Underground Garage and hundreds of AAA radio stations. Pinell believes the band has managed to garner such high profile exposure because of their legendary House Of Vibes studio.

"The House Of Vibes is a full-blown commercial studio. Aside from studio time that's booked by our clients, we have access to it anytime we want," Pinell said. "Without the pressure of being on the clock over our heads, we can craft our recordings to our version of perfection."

Pinell's solos are finely crafted, detail-rich affairs that fall in line with the general belief that women are more organized than men. The other side of the coin is Pinell's ability to play with a sense of abandon that is greatly lacking in most 21st century rock music.

"I've always been aware of the organizational side of my personality, so once I've arranged and written a part to my satisfaction I just let go while playing it," Pinell says. "There's no point in crafting something without giving it life and letting it breath."

From an equal rights perspective, Pinell has busted through the metaphorical wall that has kept women out of the ranks of guitar greats.

"It's more like I've chipped and clawed my way through that wall," Pinell said. "Although I'm glad to be on the other side, it's a bit lonely over here."

"How I Won The War" by The Grip Weeds is recently released by Jem Recordings and is available now from Amazon, iTunes, your local record store and direct from the band at www.gripweeds.com . Visit www.gripweeds.com for more information.