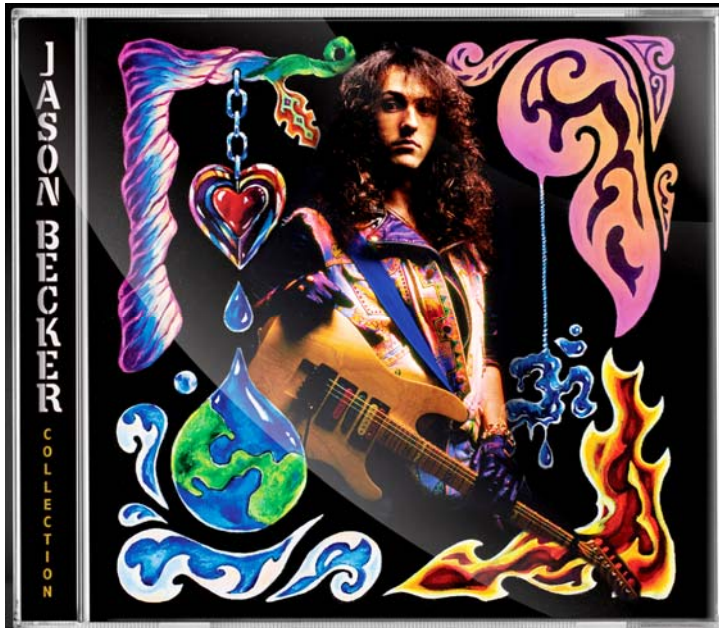


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# Shrapnel Records releases long-awaited CD by renowned guitarist JASON BECKER



Paralyzed since 1997, the former David Lee Roth lead guitarist was diagnosed with ALS almost two decades ago

The year was 1989, and 19-year-old Jason Becker had the rock 'n' roll world at his feet. He was fast emerging as one of the most accomplished guitarists in the world with three ground-breaking albums that continue to inspire guitarists around the globe today. "For Jason Becker, life was one big six-stringed American Dream," wrote *Guitar World*.

The readers of *Guitar* magazine had just awarded him the industry's highest honor for emerging recording artists: "Metal God in Waiting." Then came the news that Becker had scaled the highest peak of all: as David Lee Roth's pick for his lead guitarist, a coveted position previously held by legends Eddie Van Halen and Steve Vai. "It was the rock guitar equivalent of being asked to succeed Joe Montana with the Forty Niners," reported *Guitar World*. "And Jason scored. With Roth he cut *A Little Ain't Enough*, perhaps the best album ever made by the flamboyant frontman."

Then tragedy struck. One week into rehearsals Becker was given the devastating news that he had ALS (also known as Lou Gehrig's disease) and given only three to five years to live. Furthermore, he would begin losing body movement immediately. Becker remembers smiling politely back at the doctors, while thinking to himself: *You will see. I will beat this. I'm in the ultimate guitar gig. Nothing can bring me down!*

Indeed, Becker, now 39, has been nearly unstoppable for almost two decades – despite the onset of complete paralysis and loss of speech over a decade ago. Following his diagnosis, he launched into a

composing, performing and recording marathon while there was still time. In 1990, a friend set him up with a computer program to compose his next album, *Perspective*, making it possible to continue work with his right hand and a keyboard. Even with access to a state-of-the-art recording studio, the project took four years to complete. Warner Bros. Records released it in 1996, at the urging of Eddie Van Halen. Two compilations of unreleased recordings, *The Raspberry Jams* and *Blackberry Jams*, followed in 1999 and 2002 through Shrapnel Records. Several years ago, Becker added an instructional DVD, *The Legendary Guitar of Jason Becker*.

Becker has just released his most ambitious CD since the early 1990s -- *The Jason Becker Collection* – through his long-time label, Shrapnel Records. The long-awaited CD, which debuted at #27 on Music Monitor Network's 1<sup>st</sup> Day Sales Chart last week, includes three major new compositions, a 'best of' range of selections from previous albums, and riveting guest performances by such legendary guitarists as **Steve Vai**, **Joe Satriani**, **Marty Friedman** (Megadeth), **Greg Howe** (Justin Timberlake, Michael Jackson, Enrique Iglesias, Nsync), **Michael Lee Firkins**, **Steve Hunter** (Peter Gabriel, Alice Cooper, Lou Reed, Tracy Chapman), **Matt Bissonette** (Ringo Starr, Rick Springfield) and **Dave Lopez** (Flipsyde). Remarkably, all three new songs were composed through a revolutionary communication system designed by Becker's father that allows him to quickly spell out sentences using an eye geometry sign language.

Among those Becker has worked with, David Lee Roth recently said: "Jason's enthusiasm, energy and continued drive are an inspiration to us all. These are the ingredients with which he has always created his music. This, more than anything, is the greatest message that any musician could propose." Steve Vai: "Jason has discovered a brilliant source of inspiration within himself. His deep soul searching has resulted in a body of music that reveals courage and insight and is deeply moving." Marty Friedman: "'To call Jason a genius is an understatement. He doesn't cater to trends, target audiences, marketing gimmicks or anything like that. He plays out the emotions from his heart and makes real music that is a salute to the human spirit." Steve Perry (Journey): "Jason is one of the most unique stylists I've ever had the opportunity to work with."

One of only 5% of ALS victims to survive 20 years, according to statistics released by the [ALS Association](#), Becker's health is amazingly stable. He rarely sees a doctor and hasn't been on medication for years. Instead, Becker thrives on an organic diet, daily meditation, and his work, along with around-the-clock support from family and friends.

Thanks to the Internet, Becker's legacy continues to grow around the world. Fans use his [MySpace page](#), as a virtual clubhouse, where they can check in to read his postings, pick up the latest

news, view videos and listen to audio clips: [myspace.com/jasonelibecker](http://myspace.com/jasonelibecker) There are also over 2000 videos related to Becker posted at [YouTube.com](http://YouTube.com), some of which have drawn over a million views.

***The Jason Becker Collection can be ordered online at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com), [www.ShrapnelRecords.com](http://www.ShrapnelRecords.com), and [iTunes](http://iTunes). In his honor, two new products have also just debuted: [Paradise Guitars](#) has created the new Jason Becker Signature Guitar and [Pro Tone Pedals](#) has designed the Jason Becker Distortion Pedal. His instructional video, *The Legendary Guitar of Jason Becker*, is available through [Amazon](http://Amazon), and previous albums can be purchased through both Amazon and Shrapnel Records. Visit Becker in MySpace at [www.myspace.com/jasonelibecker](http://www.myspace.com/jasonelibecker)***

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## About Jason Becker

Raised in the Bay Area, Becker was taught how to play by his father, a visual artist and classical guitarist who had trained under a student of Andrés Segovia. At age five, Becker received his first guitar and began learning Bob Dylan songs. (Both Dylan and classical music were already the youngster's favorites.) By nine he was playing Eric Clapton, Jimi Hendrix, Jeff Beck, and Roy Buchanan as well. His mastery of "Further Up the Road" was so impressive for a 13-year-old that Becker's parents found the money to buy him a black-and-white Fender Stratocaster, just like Clapton's. As a freshman in high school, when Becker heard Van Halen's debut album, he was so blown away that he spent hours every day trying to decipher Eddie Van Halen's guitar solo, "Eruption," as well as Stevie Ray Vaughan's song "Lenny" – both of which inspired him to begin writing his own pieces.

In 1986, at the age of 16, Becker sent performance tapes of himself to Mike Varney, the head of the guitar-oriented Shrapnel Records label. Varney in turn introduced him to Marty Friedman, whom Becker calls "the greatest and most original guitarist I had ever heard. He became my biggest musical influence. He taught me harmonies and counterpoint lines to his songs." They formed the band Cacophony, and over the next several years recorded the albums, *Speed Metal Symphony* and *Go Off!*. Becker also began a solo career with his classic, *Perpetual Burn*.

On Mother's Day 1989, Becker was awakened in the middle of the night by "a huge painful cramp in my left calf muscle. The next day it was still tight and also feeling lazy, like after you've done a strenuous work out and your muscles just feel tired. I spent the next few months trying to get rid of that feeling by doing lots of stretches and jogging, and playing catch with the football whenever I could. But when I would play live shows, I'd get wiped out and hot. The lights, energy, and my jumping around almost made me nauseous."

It was directly after he returned from a solo tour in Japan that Becker learned Varney had recommended him to David Lee Roth's drummer, Gregg Bissonette, who had called looking for candidates to replace Steve Vai. When Becker flew down for the audition, he was already limping, but didn't think anything about it. His left hand was also getting weak, and the muscle between his thumb and index finger was visibly shrinking.

Becker has been the subject of numerous honors over the years. Among them, ABC News named him a "Person of the Week." Lion Music produced two tribute CDs – called "Warmth in the Wilderness" – which featured various musicians performing Becker's songs and pieces inspired by him. His music has been performed by the Diablo Ballet and at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, and there have been several major benefits to help relieve the on-going financial burden of his disease.

In his autobiography, *Crazy from the Heat*, David Lee Roth wrote: "Trying to hire genius is like designing art by committee—damn near impossible. But I came so close you could feel the heat coming off of it, with a fellow named Jason Becker... His parents had been like Haight-Ashbury hippies. So instead of growing up listening to Ed Van Halen records and duplicating that, he had grown up listening to all the old classics I had, as per his parents—Hendrix, Bob Dylan, Crosby, Stills and Nash. What a wealth of references in his playing... He had such a full, substantial, articulate sound, played through the simplest equipment—one amp head, one set of speakers, a foot pedal or two, all of it Dennis-the-Menaced together with spit and chicken wire. That kid could move air, man. And [he was] the kindest, gentlest, most flexible, absorbing, want-to-learn spirit that I've ever really worked with."

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Photo Credit: Courtesy Shrapnel Records. CD cover art designed by Gary Becker.

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