

Guitar Aid



NEWSLETTER

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Hi There!

Since the last newsletter, a great deal has happened. Firstly, Guitar Aid was given a full colour page in the Christian Herald (see over), then interviewed on UCB radio. Most recently we have returned from an amazing trip to Cambodia, taking many guitars to churches and youth groups.

CAMBODIA TRIP



This was our first trip to Asia, and we were not quite sure what to expect. We had read many reports of what life was like since the Pol Pot reign of terror. We felt a bit like Joshua and Caleb, because instead of despair, we found a country rich in the anointing of God, vibrant with the sound of young people worshipping God in a way that we have rarely seen on any of our travels.

The New Life Centre was alive with God's praises. It reminded me of a phrase used in a letter I once received "The servants are young and they burn". This is certainly true of the youth in Phnom Penh. NLC is totally alive with the presence of God. I wish you could have seen their faces when they received their new guitars.



Young Life is a youth group working with college students, we had a great time with them. We were able to obtain a couple of amplifiers to go with the guitars they received.



Cambodia has a brutal past, where death, destruction and persecution were commonplace. This has left the country with 75% of the population under the age of 25. As I left Cambodia, I could not stop the tears from rolling down my face as I reflected on what had been a most memorable trip. The word I took to them was from Joshua 3v5, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things amongst you". Thank you for helping me take instruments to such worthy people. Once again Thank You for your support.



Dave Sumner.

Why Dave Sumner has given away 1,300 guitars

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the arts

www.christianherald.org.uk/arts.asp



● Picking out a tune on one of Dave's guitars in Bosnia ...



● Dave Sumner - 1,300 instruments have so far been given



● Kenya: "entire bands are forming ..."

God's guitar man

IN any British worship service, you cannot move for guitars—virtually every worship leader uses one. But how many overseas Christian fellowships are there where the pastors would dearly love to have a guitar to lead the singing, but have no way of finding one, and no money to buy one?

One man in Britain has a fair idea of the answer ...

Dave Sumner of Exeter has now given away 1,300 instruments across 60 countries through his Guitar Aid charity, in his attempt to live out Paul's words in 2 Corinthians: "when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will break out in thanksgiving to God!"

The man who gives away guitars is a worship leader himself, at the Riverside Christian Centre in Exeter, and he stumbled upon his work by sheer accident.

"In 1990, I was on one of the first convoys that went in with aid for Romania. I took my guitar with me, and at the last service we played, in front of 500 people, the youth pastor asked if he could borrow it. I said 'keep it'—and seeing his reaction, and what it meant to him, made something explode inside me."

What exploded was the realisation that a guitar, a simple instrument which British worship musicians take for granted, is a rare and treasured item to a poor Christian fellowship elsewhere.

Dave, a craftsman toolmaker by



● One man and his guitars ...

IAN BOUGHTON meets the man who launched 1,000 guitars – all going to church worship leaders in developing countries



trade, realised immediately that it would be a dream come true for these fellowships if he could provide them with guitars for leading worship—but where would the guitars come from?

"Someone suggested that the big guitar companies must import a vast amount of instruments, and that some must get damaged—perhaps I could buy them, repair them, and give them away."

"As it turned out, the companies

realised that with a few alterations, it had potential.

"I spoke to the director of John Hornby Skewes, who knew this factory—he gave me £100, 25 unwanted guitars, and promised to import the new ones for me!"

The result is something quite remarkable. For just £39, a British sponsor can now pay for a brand-new Guitar Aid instrument to be sent to a worship leader in a poor community.

There is a delightful additional touch in that each guitar is delivered with sticker which identifies the donor, so that the lucky musician can send a message of thanks.

To a British eye, that £39 is unrealistically cheap—but to the recipient, the gift of a brand-new instrument can be life-changing. There is an interesting subtlety to this, explains Dave Sumner.

"The people we help expect that if they are going to be given anything, it will be something old and unwanted—they just don't expect to receive something of quality. So you can imagine how they feel when we give them a brand-new guitar, a brand-new carrying case, and sets of spare strings. They know we are treating them with respect."

And to Dave Sumner's great satisfaction, Guitar Aid guitars inspire a remarkable reaction from the musicians who receive them.

"I've seen these worship leaders make very rapid progress in their guitar-playing, far quicker than the average musician does here. And something I've seen happen throughout Africa and Eastern Europe is that entire bands are forming, and making

The guitar you sponsor could change somebody else's life

were very pleased with the idea. They didn't want any of their imperfect branded goods turning up on the British market, but they did like the idea of them going to a good cause."

They liked it so much that one company, John Hornby Skewes, has now helped him create something quite unique—the first custom-made guitar built for worship, which both supports a factory in an impoverished country, and produces something of value to remote Christian fellowships.

"I had realised I was stuck in a rut of 100 guitars a year, because I just couldn't repair any more than that," explains Dave. "Then I remembered a factory in Romania which made a very robust and very cheap guitar, and I



● Slovakia ... "worship leaders are making very rapid progress"

very fast progress, using equipment entirely supplied by Guitar Aid.

"I can't help wondering—what would they have been doing if we hadn't started all this?"

Some of the personal success stories are dramatic.

On Dave Sumner's very first trip to Eastern Europe, in 1990, he met a 12-year-old lad, Cici. Dave gave that lad his first guitar—now, 12 years later, Cici is a professional musician touring with his own worship band, Born Again. When he isn't leading

worship, he runs an orphanage. Without any doubt, it was the trust and faith of being given his first guitar that opened up the potential of that young man's life.

"Who knows?" remarks Dave Sumner. "The guitar you sponsor could change somebody else's life, just like that."

Contact Guitar Aid on 01392 278936.

■ Ian Boughton is a journalist based in Oxford