

ORIANTHI PANAGARIS

Have guitar, will travel

What do Michael Jackson, Prince, ZZ Top, Alice Cooper, Carrie Underwood, Steve Vai, Santana, Dave Stewart and B.B. King have in common? They have all been mesmerized by Greek-Australian guitar slinger Orianthi Panagaris, most of them going on to use her services, both on record and live on stage.

Blessed with an amazing voice, an ear for melody, along with the obligatory (for the music business) good looks, the Adelaide born-and-raised musician, guitarist, singer-songwriter already has two solo albums under her belt, with a third scheduled to be released in early March.

Deemed «seriously ass-whoopin'» by Carlos Santana, female guitarist Orianthi burst on the scene in 2009 thanks to the killer trifecta of Carrie Underwood, the Grammys, and the King of Pop. Born in Adelaide, Australia, Orianthi Panagaris was only six when she fell in love with the guitar thanks to her guitarist dad's record collection. Legendary names like Clapton, Hendrix, and Santana influenced her to take lessons, and she spent five years on the acoustic guitar before switching to the electric at the age of eleven.

"I listened to a lot of Elvis, Roy Orbison and The Beatles when I was really young" she says, "and then I studied classical when I was 10. I moved on to electric when I was 11 after attending a Santana concert. I turned to my dad and begged him for an electric guitar, and when I got one, I never put it down. I have been playing guitar for 18 years, and I still have the same passion for it."

The guitar-heavy music of Def Leppard, Van Halen, and Whitesnake dominated her teenage years. At the age of 15, she turned her focus to writing songs and so began her professional career and at the age of 18, she met her hero when she was invited to jam with Santana during a soundcheck. That soundcheck evolved into a half-hour guest shot during that night's concert, and with Carlos' enthusiastic endorsement, she went on to share stages with acts like Prince and ZZ Top, as well as earning a support slot on Steve Vai's 2007 world tour.

In 2007, Orianthi signed with the Geffen label and released her debut album, *Violet Journey*, which featured her vocals and fretwork. Having moved to Los Angeles, Orianthi's musicianship was later exposed to millions of television viewers when she joined Carrie Underwood's band for a 2009 Grammy Awards performance.

Orianthi started working on her major label debut *'Believe'* in 2007 which was released in October 2009. The album produced the worldwide hit «According to You», which was the Single of the Week on iTunes on 27 October 2009, reached number 2 on US radio airplay and charted to number eight in Australia, three in Japan, and achieved platinum status in the US and Australia. The charismatic rock instrumental 'Highly Strung' featuring Steve Vai became a popular YouTube video with millions of views and climbing, and her song *Suffocated* was featured on 'Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock' as a playable song. Orianthi followed up with a four song EP including two singles 'Shut Up' and 'Kiss Me and Courage'.

In 2009, she released her debut



DID YOU KNOW?

Her debut single «According to You» has peaked at No. 3 in Japan, No. 8 in Australia and No. 17 in the US; her second album, *Believe*, received a worldwide release in late 2009. In 2009, Orianthi was named one of 12 Greatest Female Electric Guitarists by *Elle* magazine. She also won the award as «Breakthrough Guitarist of the Year» 2010 by *Guitar International* magazine. She has made a commercial for Panasonic HD, featured in the song 'Now or Never' for *Bratz: The Movie*, played at the Eric Clapton Crossroads Guitar Festival and has appeared in *The New York Times* business section promoting eco-friendly acoustic guitars.

album entitled *'Believe'*, and, over the years, she has been collaborating with legends such as Prince, Steve Vai, Carlos Santana – and of course 'The King of Pop', Michael Jackson. "I don't know exactly why he picked me, but he watched my YouTube videos and loved them" she says of the experience. "He had his choice of guitar players, but I came in and played the 'Beat It' solo for him. Afterward he was so happy he got up and grabbed my arm and started walking up and down the stage area with me. He said, 'Can you play once for me?' and hired me that night. I wish he was still around. He made me believe in myself more, and I learned so much. Going into it, I thought it would be all about playing guitar solos. But the majority of it was playing chords and funky rhythms".

Orianthi appeared on several late night shows most notably on *American Idol* results show 26 March 2010. In 2010 she toured extensively with headlining shows in the US, Japan, Australia and Malaysia. She also opened for other artists including: John Mayer, Mika, Kid Rock, Daughtry and over 30 dates for Adam Lambert's *Glam Nation* Tour with former *Idol* contestant Allison Iraheta. Orianthi performed at various music festivals and charity functions.

Orianthi has been very prolific in collaborating and being featured by many artists. She is featured on Iraheta's third single «Don't Waste The Pretty» and on Fefe Dobson's song «Can't Breathe» which appears on Dobson's album *Joy* released in November 2010. She has stated that the people she has collaborated with (i.e. Allison Iraheta and Lacey Mosley) are some of her best friends. On 29 August 2011, Orianthi was announced as Alice Cooper's new guitarist, the first female to achieve that, going on to do two tours with the "King of Shock". Orianthi has appeared as a guitarist for other stars including shows with Michael Bolton, Dave Stewart and James Durbin.

On 12 October 2011, the 5 track EP *Fire*, produced by Dave Stewart was released as an iTunes download. Her third studio album, «Heaven in this Hell», is set to be released on 12 March 2013. Recorded in Nashville with producer Dave Stewart, *Heaven in This Hell* promises to deliver "a megadose of rock that weaves elements of modern country and swampy blues."