

# The tweet sound of our county's smallest musicians

LONDON

By **ROB GARRATT**

The latest guitar heroes to be making shockwaves in the music world are not leather clad rockers – but a flock of birds from Norfolk.

Step aside Jimi – the henchicks are in town, thanks to a bizarre new art installation which has transported some of the county's finest winged wonders to six-string fame and an audience of thousands in the nation's capital.

That's right; birds playing guitars. The wacky Barbican installation sees 44 teeny zebra finches happily hopping, preening and pecking their way across eight electric guitars, which are all plugged into an almighty amplifier.

And our county's feathery friends are proving top of the flocks, with more than 640,000 viewers already clocked on a YouTube video of the installation.

The Beakles' 'axe' of choice is a shiny Gibson Les Paul – a model more often found in the hands of hard rock heroes like Jimmy Page and Slash – with the six strings tuned to make a harmonious chord, while a team of techies wait in the wings to correct the odd bum note.

Every time the birds land on the guitar strings, wipe their beaks, scratch themselves or tussle with a

twig they make a noise, and bird feed is kept in clanging upturned cymbals

One onlooker is reported as describing the results as "like being backstage at a heavy metal concert while the band's tuning up."

The extraordinary work is by French artist Céleste Boursier-Mougenot, a former composer who says the installation helps answer the question of what music really is.

Lydia Yee, Barbican Art Gallery curator, said: "Zebra finches are very social and playful. Visitors to the exhibition are mesmerised by the birds and spend time watching them go about their activities – flying around the space, landing on the guitars and other perches, bathing and playing with the grasses growing in the sand."

Curators are remaining tight-lipped about whereabouts in the county the zebra finches came from; such is their celebrity status they were sourced through a specialist agent, Animal Actors. The birds leave the Barbican Centre on May 23.

■ **To hear and watch the birds in action, log on to [www.edp24.co.uk](http://www.edp24.co.uk)**

## BIRDIE SONGS

### Top 10 songs about birds

**Three Little Birds** – Bob Marley  
**Songbird** – Oasis  
**Blackbird** – The Beatles  
**Yardbird Suite** – Charlie Parker  
**Birds** – Neil Young  
**Bird On A Wire** – Johnny Cash  
**Freebird** – Lynyrd Skynyrd  
**Rockin' Robin** – Bobby Day  
**King Of Birds** – R.E.M.  
**Birds Of Paradise** – The Pretenders





**TOP OF THE FLOCKS:** The new art installation by French artist Celeste Boursier-Mougenot features 44 zebra finches from Norfolk.

