

## **GUITAR TREK –EPISODE 1**

### **A MUSICAL HOPE!**

#### **Chapter 1**

A bruised red sun sank past the silhouettes of skyscrapers, glittering on the metallic flying machines that darted back and forth through the haze. Robot cars inched along the maze of highways like ants, driverless and silent.

It was the year 2142 and the earth was ruled by robots, and humans were their slaves. Everything was run by computers, and art and music were long since outlawed. Well, there was still music, of sorts. It was created by computers and sounded like R2D2 and C3Po arguing. It was the only music that was legal, and it was called Disco.

The only humans allowed to be involved with music in any way were slaves to the robots, and their job was to crank out soul killing electronic music on computers. They thought, said and did what the robots told them to, and kept their mouths shut except when yelling “pump it up” or “let’s get this party going!” at robot functions. In other words, they were “DJ’s”.

But on the outskirts of the Robot City there still remained scattered tribes of free humans. They lived in hiding in mountain caves and underground tunnels, and among them were the last surviving artists and musicians. It was in one of

these tunnel complexes that a group of revolutionaries dwelled, who's mission was to keep real music alive, by any means.

They called themselves the MRM, or "Musicians Resistance Movement". They were the only entertainment the human refugees had, and would sing songs in the flickering light of the cave fires at nightfall.

They also took it upon themselves to protect their fellow free men, and would hunt small robots or DJ's who wandered outside the walls of Robot City. A captured DJ was a priceless source of intelligence, and were easy prey once separated from the pack.

These DJ's were truly spineless, mean as small dogs when in a pack, but completely helpless when caught alone. They had evolved into large-headed thin-necked creatures after centuries of playing disco on laptop computers.

When captured it was fairly easy to get them to talk, but if they clammed up the solution was simple: tie them to a tree and subject them to live folk music! Even the toughest DJ would crack after several minutes of Scarborough Fair, or anything by Peter Paul and Mary.

Today a young man named Seth was heading the hunting expedition. Seth was a longtime member of the MRM and knew every Bob Dylan song ever written. He never went anywhere without his ancient nylon string guitar, strung across his back like bow and arrow.

Today was the hunt, and Seth led the way.

They moved across the sand toward the distant walls of Robot City shimmering in the heat. It was going to be a good

hunt, thought Seth. He could feel it in his bones.

The procession paused in a stand of trees, and Seth shook the last drops of water from his canteen.

“Time to lay some bait...” he whispered. The rest nodded. They knew the drill. The DJ’s were irresistibly attracted to anything shiny or hi-tech looking, and a well-placed CD or thumb drive, glinting in the sun, would invariably bring one out into the open.

Seth tossed several CD’s onto the sand and hunkered down to wait.

Then they heard it: a snuffling sound, interspersed with muttering, and getting closer.

“Drop the bass.... yeh, yeh...who wants to party...everybody on the dance floor... yeh...”

The DJ came into view and stopped. His beady eyes peered out from a sideways ball cap, and one hand held up his massive pants. Around his neck hung a necklace of thumb drives and iPhone cords, and his head bobbed to the invisible beat of his head phones. He was ridiculous.

Then he spotted the CDs, glittering in the sand. With a cackle he scampered over and pounced on them.

“Yo! Free discs! Ground score!”

Seth made a hand signal and a large net sailed through the air and covered the little creature, who began leaping about and shrieking piteously.

“Now!” Seth yelled, and his crew surrounded the net, pinning it down.

Seth pressed his face next to the DJ’s.

“Got you! You ready to talk?”

The DJ hissed and shrunk away. “Never! DJ will NEVER

talk!" He spat.

"Either you talk, or I'll MAKE you talk!" Seth barked, shaking the net.

"NEVER!"

"OK, you're getting the treatment. I didn't want to do this..." Seth sighed, slinging his guitar around and forming a D chord.

The DJ shrank back in horror. "Nooooooooo.... GUITAR??"

Seth nodded and launched into song: "How many roads must a man walk down..."

"Aaaug, it hurts!!!" The DJ cried, curling into a ball. "Stop torturing poor DJ with nasty music sounds!"

"...Before...you can call him a man..." Seth continued, in a perfect Bob Dylan drawl.

"Okay, okay," the DJ shrieked. "Will talk to nasty humans, yessss!"

Seth set his guitar down. "Good. Now tell us: when is the next Robot gathering?" The DJ moaned and wrung his hands.

"This weekend...big party...." He whispered. "That's all I know...."

Seth shook his head and reached for the guitar, and the DJ shrieked and began pleading. "No more guitar! No more guitar!!"

"And...how many seas...!" Seth continued, singing each word painfully slow.

"Okay, stop nasty noises, please – will tell you everything, precious...everything!"

Seth paused, pick in the air mid-strum. "This had better be good, little man!"

The DJ had gone fetal, rocking back and forth in the dirt.

Seth leaned in, putting on his meanest scowl. “Tell us your secrets, NOW, or I’ll play Desolation Row, every single verse!”

The DJ recoiled in horror. “I’ll tell!! I’ll tell!!” He hissed. “What do you want to know??”

Seth grabbed the net and pulled the DJ’s wobbly head close. “Tell us what the robots are afraid of!!” He hissed through clenched teeth.

“They...th-th-they.... are afraid of....” chattered the DJ, shaking like a leaf.

Seth shook the net. “Yes?? afraid of...?”

The DJ writhed in torment, and spat the word out like poison.

“BANJOS!”

## Chapter 2

They gathered at the council ring around a moss-covered stump. The top was flattened into a table, covered with stones and twigs forming a primitive map, and massive oaks cast a patchwork quilt of shade. Their voices were hushed and urgent.

“This is big. REAL big...” Seth whispered. “We’ve never heard of anything that the Robots were afraid of, until now!”

The rest nodded grimly. They were about a dozen strong, a ragged bunch of men with tangled hair and intense eyes. They were the *Musician’s Resistance Movement*.

It was the year 2140 and Robots had taken over the earth, driving the human race into hiding. The Musician’s Resistance Movement, or MRM, had just received intelligence that the Robots were deathly afraid of banjos, and their leader Seth was intent on taking advantage of this.

“We need to find a banjo player, NOW!”

A tall cadaverous looking man raised his hand. His bald dome was framed with the remains of a mighty mullet. He had acquired the nickname “Skullet” and bore it with pride.

“I hear tell of a banjo player that lives across the Dead Desert, in the eastern caves.” He rasped. “She is but a little girl, but they say her powers are strong!”

Skullet was an ex-Heavy Metal singer, and his voice was trashed.

Seth raised an eyebrow. “The eastern caves, huh?” He mused, planting a finger on the map. “That is quite a ways

away...”

Skullet grinned, displaying a patchy row of teeth. “Well if you can find a closer banjo player, then tell us!” He challenged.

Seth winced. “Shut up, Skullet.” He snapped. “This means crossing the Dead Desert. You know what happened to the last ones who tried that!”

The Dead Desert was an endless landfill created by the Robots, who dumped all the packaging from their computers there. It was a sea of bubble wrap and Styrofoam, and struck terror in the hearts of the humans.

The circle was silent.

Seth rose slowly. “Well if this is the only way, we will go. But I need a team...who is with me?”

No one said a word. In the distance a wolf howled.

“Very well. Then I will take...YOU!” Said Seth, pointing at Skullet. “And....and...”

The circle shrank back. “And the DJ! For he knows the way across the wasteland!”

Everyone let out a breath. The DJ whimpered, covering his pumpkin-sized head with his arms.

Seth nodded. “Very well. We will meet at dawn. Meeting is adjourned.”

The group melted back into the trees.

The next morning they gathered at the cave entrance, silhouetted against the early sky. Skullet was tall and stooped, Seth was square and well-muscled, and their little prisoner crouched between them on a leash.

“Lead us to the Dead Desert, little man!” Seth commanded, and the DJ growled and begun galumphing ahead.

They came to an overlook, and the DJ skidded to a stop. “Dead Desert! Dead Desert!” He crowed, clapping his hands to his oversize ball cap.

Seth and Skullet drew alongside and peered over. It was a fearsome and majestic sight: an ocean of electronic waste, stretching as far as the eye could see. Jagged branches of dead trees groped toward the sky and the odor of melted plastic assaulted their nostrils.

“Well, what’s next?” Seth addressed the DJ, who was now wringing his little hands in torment.

“Please master, don’t make us go into the Dead Desert!” It whined.

Seth gave a tug on the leash. “You wanna hear another Bob Dylan song? I’ve got Wagon Wheel ready to go!”

The blood drained from the DJ’s face. “NOOOOO!! Not the Wagon Wheel!! Bad, nasty Wagon Wheel! We hates it!”

Seth smirked. “That’s what I thought. Now, lead the way...”

They clambered down the ravine and stopped at the edge.

Seth smirked. “Time to see if this really works..” He said. “Hand me my guitar...”

Skullet obeyed. “Are you thinking of...of...the Dance of the Ancestors??” He whispered.

“Yep.”

There was a myth, told by grandmothers around the campfires, that the only way to cross the dead dessert alive was to pop the bubble wrap faster than it could bury you.

And long ago when musicians were still free, there was something called “clog dancing”, involving stomping one’s feet



fast and furiously in time to music. The grandmothers called it the Dance of the Ancestors, and they believed this was the only way to pop the bubble wrap fast enough to make it across.

Seth aimed his guitar across the silent ocean of plastic. "Let's DO this!" Skullet whipped out a rusty harmonica and held it up, sparking in the sun. "Count us off, dude!"

"You know Turkey in the Straw right?"

"Better than I know my own mother!"

"You don't know her that well?"

"Oh, no...I just meant I know 'Turkey in the Straw' REALLY well."

"Oh...got it."

"Although, I must admit we were never really that close, after I stopped returning her calls or coming over to visit. But one really can't blame me, as having a other didn't fit so well into the rock and roll lifestyle..."

"Okay, okay, I got it. Here we go! A one, and a two..."

The harmonica and guitar hammered out a rousing beat, and they began to dance. *Deedle dee, deedle dee, deedle STOMP STOMP STOMP...Deedle dee, deedle dee, deedle STOMP STOMP STOMP!*

Dust rose around their pounding feet as they stomped into the bubble wrap, and the air was filled with rapid fire popping. It sounded like gunfire, in rhythm with the tune.

Like two whirling dervishes they sliced open a pathway, stomping and strumming, pop pop pop!

"Dude, it's working!" Gaspd Skullet in between harmonica toots.

Seth flashed a sweaty grin. "Keep stomping old man..." He panted. "We're not out of the woods just yet!"

Far above, a raven circled and watched the plume of dust as they cut a path through the Dead Desert, leaving behind a winding trail of flattened bubble wrap. Catching a sudden gust the bird climbed higher, and in the distance the grey rise of some far, stone mountains completed the desolate tone of the surroundings.

*Deedle dee, deedle dee, deedle STOMP STOMP STOMP...*