



Kate Rose lives and breathes air guitar.

PHOTO BY ASHLEY HAYES-STONE

Breathtaking air guitar

The scene: last summer in Oulu, Finland. A giant stage built for a rock star. Professional lighting, flashy projections, a roaring crowd in the center of the city. Sacramentan **Kate Rose** runs out on stage sporting a very '80s patriotic fringe crop top paired with skin-tight black leggings while carrying a bag of fun size Kit Kats she tosses into the crowd. Rose—whose stage name is KitKat—holds her arm up in the air, then does a high kick as guitar riffs from Thundermother's "It's Just a Tease" erupt from the speakers. There's suddenly a guitar in her hands, albeit an invisible one, and she immediately begins to air shred. Watch the video.

While representing Sacramento, Rose received fifth place at the 2018 Air Guitar World Championship. Now, Rose holds the title of Santa Cruz champion and helped host the Sacramento Air Guitar Qualifier Competition at B Street Theatre last month. Before heading to compete in the U.S. Air Guitar National Finals in August, Rose set aside time from her air rock 'n' roll lifestyle to chat with SN&R.

What made you want to be an air guitarist?

So Kyle, my partner, got me into air guitar. At first, I was like, this is amazing, but I could never do anything like this because you have to set your ego aside and make an ass of yourself on stage for 60 seconds. But as soon as I searched YouTube and saw a bunch of people essentially dancing on stage, I was like, "Oh, this is dancing. I can do this." I don't know how to play guitar for anything, but I can dance.

How did you get your stage name, KitKat?

My partner and I met playing kickball, and he would describe me to his friends like, "Oh, you know, Kickball Kate." He tried shortening it to Kick Kate, and then he ended up calling me KitKat

accidentally, and it just stuck. He finally told me when I was trying to think of a stage name to compete with. He was like, "Well, I just called you KitKat to the guys." I was like, "How did I not know about this adorable nickname before?" It's perfect because it's related to chocolate—which I love—and cats, which I also love. I usually throw Kit Kats into the audience and I'm currently working on a new Kit Kat-throwing technique, because I accidentally threw it at a guy's face. But he was a good sport about it.

What's your go-to song to shred to?

I'm really feeling Heart. I tried really hard to make a version of "Barracuda" work, and I did a cut of it in the second round in San Diego last year, and it just felt so good to rock to that on stage with that amazing riff. So, Heart is always a great go-to because there are two women in the band and it feels like a good fit for KitKat. I always try to represent and pick at least a female vocalist, if not a female guitarist, to do my set to.

What's "airness"?

The way that air guitarists describe it, it's like porn. You know it when you see it. It's that extra oomph that takes you from just being on stage and kind of performing. It's like elevating it from air guitar to performance arts. It's like you did something different and the crowd is eating it up.

The most memorable moment on stage?

It was the 2017 Sacramento air guitar competition, and we were still hosting it at Starlite Lounge. We were in the second round and I wanted to finish strong, so the song I chose was a rock version of Hall & Oates' "You Make My Dreams." It was perfect for me 'cause I just got to dance and lose my mind on stage. And then at the very end, I jumped on my brother's shoulders and Kyle's brother's shoulders, and I continued to air guitar as they walked me through the crowd to the judges' table, and everyone lost their minds. □

True fans will catch Kate Rose at the U.S. Air Guitar Finals in Nashville on Aug. 3. Tickets are \$10-\$15, airfare likely costs more.