



## **Guitar Center Celebrates the Life of Eddie Van Halen with a New Mural at Flagship Hollywood Store**

*Acclaimed muralist Robert Vargas designed and painted the mural in tribute to the late music legend, marking what would have been Eddie's 66<sup>th</sup> birthday*

**Westlake Village, CA** (January 26, 2021) – Guitar Center, the world's largest musical instrument retailer, has unveiled a new mural of Eddie Van Halen on the outside wall of its flagship Hollywood, California store located on the famous Sunset Strip. With January 26, 2021, marking the late guitar legend's 66<sup>th</sup> birthday, renowned muralist Robert Vargas teamed with Guitar Center to pay tribute to the legacy of Van Halen with this striking mural, which depicts Eddie playing his iconic "Frankenstrat" guitar. Vargas donated his time and talent to design and create the mural, which measures approximately 17 feet tall x 105 feet long and covers the entirety of the store's outer wall at its rear entrance.

Vargas remarks, "Eddie was one of my creative heroes. When I was young, the debut Van Halen record was the first album I ever owned. He influenced me over the years in so many different ways. As soon as the news hit of his passing, I knew I had to do something creative to memorialize him, and Guitar Center was the obvious venue. Right here on the Sunset Strip, where the band made their bones – I can't think of a better place for this tribute to him, and I thank Guitar Center for giving me the canvas to share it with the world."

Guitar Center's Hollywood location has a history of paying tribute to Eddie Van Halen, with Eddie's handprints being a centerpiece and main attraction of Guitar Center's iconic RockWalk outside the store, along with several of his prized instruments and other memorabilia on display behind glass.

Jean-Claude Escudie, Guitar Center Category Manager, notes, "Eddie Van Halen was a truly monumental force in rock music. He made lead guitar playing popular when it might have been slipping away into punk and new wave minimalist territory, and then basically the entire 80s hard rock scene followed in his wake. Guitar Center saw this first-hand, as generations of lead guitarists have flocked to our stores to try to capture something of what inspires them about Eddie's sound. Besides that, sometimes people forget that he was an immigrant and multi-racial, so in so many ways his story is the story of the American experience."

When people experience the mural, Vargas wants them to see Eddie "in his full glory" and feel like anything is possible. He continues, "When you work hard at something, you can reach your full potential. Be true to your art, and your art will be true to you. I had the chance to meet Eddie a few years back, and because he and I connected on the nature of art and creativity, painting him here is therapeutic. Thank you, Guitar Center for allowing me to use my creative process to connect with him one more time and share it with the world."

In addition to the monumental Eddie Van Halen mural on the flagship Guitar Center Hollywood store wall, the store also features a Jimi Hendrix mural, unveiled Nov. 3, 2018, in tribute to the musician. Outside the entrance to the store are concrete blocks bearing the signatures and handprints from more than 150 notable musicians (including Van Halen), producers, iconic bands, and music instrument manufacturers which have been recognized for achievements with induction into the world famous RockWalk.

You can visit Guitar Center's [Instagram page](#) or [YouTube channel](#) throughout the day to watch behind-the-scenes video of the Eddie Van Halen mural coming to life at the Hollywood flagship store and follow @TheRobertVargas on Instagram to see more of Robert's murals.

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### **About Guitar Center:**

Guitar Center is a leading retailer of musical instruments, lessons, repairs and rentals in the U.S. With nearly 300 stores across the U.S. and one of the top direct sales websites in the industry, Guitar Center has helped people make music for more than 50 years. Guitar Center also provides customers with various musician-based services, including Guitar Center Lessons, where musicians of all ages and skill levels can learn to play a variety of instruments in many music genres; GC Repairs, an on-site maintenance and repairs service; and GC Rentals, a program offering easy rentals of instruments and other sound reinforcement gear. Additionally, Guitar Center's sister brands include Music & Arts, which operates more than 200 stores specializing in band & orchestral instruments for sale and rental, serving teachers, band directors, college professors and students, and Musician's Friend, a leading direct marketer of musical instruments in the United States. For more information about Guitar Center, please visit [www.guitarcenter.com](http://www.guitarcenter.com).

### **About Robert Vargas:**

Robert Vargas is a contemporary artist known for his mixed-media portraits, murals and live events. Los Angeles native and visual artist, Vargas is emerging as a leading creative force in the revitalization of Downtown LA's art scene. His paintings and drawings infuse classic genres of portraiture and nudes with an avant-garde explosivity that not only captures the visage and likeness of his subjects, but seems to excavate the intimate aspects of their character. Vargas' intensely provocative creative process has become as celebrated as his dynamic completed works, which have led to collaborations with GQ, Google Play, Lucasfilms, Disney, BMW Australia, Lexus, Ford, Vans and more. Robert Vargas selects his subjects intuitively at his highly attended live-painting sessions, creating powerful and sublime representations of the human connection through his portraiture. His visual vocabulary pulls from life experience, a viscerally sensual approach to line and texture, and an almost mannerist choreography of abstraction and representation that combine to unforgettable effect in his portraits. An alumnus of Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY, Vargas has showcased in galleries around the world and is in the permanent collection of the Autry Museum and Vida Museum in Sweden. He was featured twice on the cover of LA Weekly's prestigious "Best of LA/ People" issue, following widespread editorial coverage for his work. He has attracted the attention of Goldie Hawn, Johnny Depp, Kate Hudson, Mötley Crüe's Nikki Sixx and Snoop Dogg, all whom have sat for Vargas while he has painted them live. Robert Vargas has also been making his mark with his public mural work both in Los Angeles and throughout the world; which he sees as a means to reach a wider audience and promote accessible art and community through the creative process. Continuing to shape the way the city's history is written, he is currently working on his biggest project yet: a fourteen-story mural in Downtown L.A. that will rank as the largest mural in the world by a single artist to be complete in the Summer of 2021.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:**

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