

## Bobby Yang plays violin like Jimi Hendrix, not Fritz Kreisler



### ASHA MEVLANA

American-born Asha Mevlana has it all. She's just 24, beautiful, a versatile string player with a foot in many camps – acoustic, electric, violin, piano – and many styles. Starting violin and viola aged six, she studied with members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra before doing a music degree at Wellesley College. Then she broke out, moved to New York City and 'plunged into the world of alternative string music', as she describes it. For a while she played viola in an avant-garde quartet called Invert! Then she put aside her classical instruments and picked up an electric seven-string Viper designed by Mark Wood (see main text). Since moving to the West Coast, Mevlana has performed in Van Helsing's Curse, a rock/metal stage show produced by Twisted Sister singer Dee Snider. She has appeared with Alanis Morissette on the *Tonight* show, and with another electric strings band, the Trans-Siberian Orchestra. Now she's creating a 'rock concept' show, Goddess Rock, for two Viper violins, taking in songs by The Beatles, Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, Guns N' Roses and Ozzy Osbourne and incorporating choreography and multimedia. [www.ashamevlana.com](http://www.ashamevlana.com)

### BILLY THOMPSON

Born into a musical family in the Wirral, near Liverpool, Billy must be the most versatile fiddler in Britain. He veers from jazz to gypsy, folk to fusion, Celtic to classical, using his classical violin both straight and amplified, switching to a purpose-built electric instrument, or even a MIDI-violin. At Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama he took classes with piano legend Keith Tippett. He honed his improvisation skills, reaching the finals of the Young Jazz Musician of the Year competition in 1996 and 1998. He now teaches regular violin improvisation courses at the Benslow Music Trust in Hertfordshire. Billy plays with jazz giant Barbara Thompson's band Paraphernalia, and is a key member of world music band The Amigos. As Amledd, Billy and singer-songwriter Rhian Williams are writing and producing a Welsh-language pop album. This summer Billy joins Barbara Thompson and Paraphernalia for the Never Say Goodbye tour, and in July he tours with The Amigos. More info at [www.billythompson.co.uk](http://www.billythompson.co.uk)



### BOBBY YANG

Bobby Yang rebelled against his strict Taiwanese parents by insisting on playing the violin – like Jimi Hendrix, not Fritz Kreisler! The 27-year-old's performances are more attention-grabbing than those of the average violin soloist – he leaps around the stage, bending double over the violin and falling to his knees under a single spotlight. He doesn't rate purpose-built electric violins, because they're not responsive enough to cope with his highly physical style. Wouldn't you love to have seen the concert in Aspen when he gave a breakthrough performance of Mozart's Violin Concerto no. 3 with improvised cadenzas and a last movement cadenza tribute to Hendrix's *Hey Joe*? In the studio he uses the violin to create orchestral layers, composing parts for the cello, viola and violin and then performing each part on a separate track to create a recorded orchestra. Now based in Atlanta, Yang's latest CD is called *No. 1 Tribute*. Ego? That says it all, really. [www.bobbyyang.com](http://www.bobbyyang.com)