Tom Doughty demonstrating his ...ue method of guitar playing

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gled as we all experiment to see noises we can produce. After the l cacophony, it isn't long before we ll producing occasionally pleasant ds.

ne next stage is to all play the same ı at the same time. Under Doughty's ance we tackle Imagine, by John on. It's a little loose, but clearly gnisable.

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/e reluctantly break for lunch and return for a demonstration of some r techniques and an introduction e specialist lap guitars that he has ght along to play. Another couple ırs fly by, and it's time to finish. catch up with Tom Doughty wards, and he's delighted with the session.

The response was fantastic. I reckon I could have left that workshop at 12 o'clock and come back at three and people would still be sitting there saying, *Listen to this! Wow! What's going on here?,*

And everyone left the session saying, *I'm going to do some more of this.*

I ask him how the idea for the workshops came about.

"I was teaching a couple of tetras over the internet, when I became acutely aware of the difference in rehabilitation between when I was injured and now.

"It feels like there are less risks being taken, as we get more patient choice. There are times in your life when that's not such a good thing, because people are far less able than they used to be, as far as I can see. Especially people of my level of disability who are on the periphery of independence.

"Despite my restricted hand movement, I do have really good dexterity, which is not about finger movement. I felt like I should maybe impart some of that experience.

"Then I played a big open-air festival last year and I spotted another tetra in the crowd. The difference between us was that I'd been lifted up onto a stage to play the guitar and sing. He watched me play, and afterwards he came across and found me. He got up really close, so he could look at my hands, and his exact words were,

*How the f***ing hell do you do that?*

He made me think, "I should share this with more people. It should be less of a secret than it is."

When the conversation moves on to what playing music can bring to people, Doughty's passion is obvious.

"I really do believe in music. I can sit with a guitar, and hours will pass. It's the most wonderful feeling. There's no right or wrong way, no competitiveness involved. And it makes you fit, it makes you concentrate, it makes you perfect small movements and motor skills."

Doughty's next move was to work out a way to share his knowledge and enthusiasm.

"I decided to try and arrange some workshops and concerts, so I sounded out the spinal centres. The response was mixed. Some were really up for it, others saw it as an organisational nightmare, and a health and safety issue, trying to find a reason why they can't do something."

He wrote to the Arts Council and managed to secure funding, and his reputation in the music industry led Yamaha to donate a number of guitars. The legacy is an important aspect of the project. One guitar will be left at each of the spinal centres to encourage newly injured people to consider taking up music. The original plan was even more ambitious, although harder to execute.

"My idea was to teach a member of staff, but time and job descriptions have made this difficult, although some have been excellent."

While he may not find a hidden blues legend amongst the staff in every centre, there is no doubt that Tom Doughty's drive to share his musical passion with others will leave a lasting impression on all those who have taken part. And that includes me.

We finish the day with Doughty performing in the spinal gym to a crowd of patients and staff. The mellow tones of his guitar are surely the most beautiful sounds ever heard in that space...

Tim Rushby-Smith, T12