

ism is irrelevant; musicians participate in the community because of the joy of making music or dealing with gear. There are no strong indications of rivalry or belittlement resulting from social hierarchies or attempts to gain status.⁴¹

Compared to forums for music producers, communities for musicians are collegial. The members enjoy their ‘guilty pleasure’ together because equipment would be much less enjoyable if the pleasures were not shared with peers. One musician highlights in their introduction to a GAS-related thread that ‘these threads are always good fun (and surprisingly educational)’. The two components, fun and education, seem to be at the centre of GAS. Musicians delight in experimenting with gear and sharing their experiences. At the same time, the way of using it is decisive as to whether gear hampers or facilitates musical development since it accompanies growing expertise. For a player of popular music, knowledge of equipment and how to use it best is essential. Equipment will not replace playing skills and musical intuition, but it is a tool that both requires and facilitates musical expression.

⁴¹ Although there are no strong indications of a social hierarchy, the communities show a gender imbalance with an overrepresentation of male members. In general, they accept female musicians, but the frequent occurrence of sexist expressions may still discourage non-male musicians, making these communities a mainly male-dominated space.