

# DAILY NEWS

## Steven Van Zandt Rocks Out With Bronx Students After Donating New Guitars

By: Corinne Lestch, N.Y. | September 21, 2011

**Kids learning** how to play rock ‘n’ roll got more than a crash course when they jammed with legendary musician Steven Van Zandt Tuesday.

The multitalented member of Bruce Springsteen’s E Street Band and his wife, Maureen, surprised about 25 students at Intermediate School 162 Lola Rodriguez De Tio with brand-new guitars and amplifiers.

The nonprofit program Little Kids Rock, which brings music education to underserved schools, paired with Van Zandt’s charity, Rock and Roll Forever Foundation, for the event.

“Putting instruments in their hands is empowering,” said Van Zandt, also known for his acting stint on *The Sopranos*. “[Music in schools] is absolutely vital. We’re the only country that thinks art is a luxury - it’s not. Kids who take arts classes do better in school.

“Instead of saying, ‘Take that iPod out of your ear,’ it should be, ‘What are you listening to?’”

The preteens showed off their shredding skills on electric and acoustic guitars with songs they have been practicing for the past two weeks: Lady Gaga’s “Edge of Glory” and Elvis Presley’s “A Little Less Conversation.”

For the third song, Van Zandt - wearing a colorful paisley shirt, ripped jeans, purple coat and requisite scarf around his head - helped some shy students unleash their inner rock star.



Photo courtesy of Enid Alvarez

On The Rolling Stones’ “Satisfaction,” he played guitar and sang next to Eddianne Alvarez and Iris Bermudez, both 12, who swayed and started clapping to the rhythm by the song’s end.

“It was awesome!” said Alvarez, who admitted she doesn’t know who Bruce Springsteen is but vowed to do some research. “[Van Zandt] was really funny, and he just taught me how to sing a little better.”

After the jam session, the seventh- and eighth-graders gathered in a semi-circle around the Van Zandts and peppered Steven with questions, ranging from his favorite touring spot (Europe) to his musical inspiration (The Beatles).

The self-taught guitar player also stressed that some of the “inventors” of rock and roll were African-American, such as Little Richard and Chuck Berry.

“What did it take to get where you are today?” asked one curious student.

“Your teacher is showing you that what we do is a craft - just like a carpenter builds houses, making music is a craft that has to be learned,” Van Zandt answered. “You slowly start to absorb... and all of a sudden you have an original song.

“It’s a miracle if you write a really good song, if you write something out of thin air.”