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How I Play: The Marias on Collaboration and the Power of Writing Songs

María and Josh Conway talk about their musical beginnings and what they've learned along the way.

By Mike Duffy

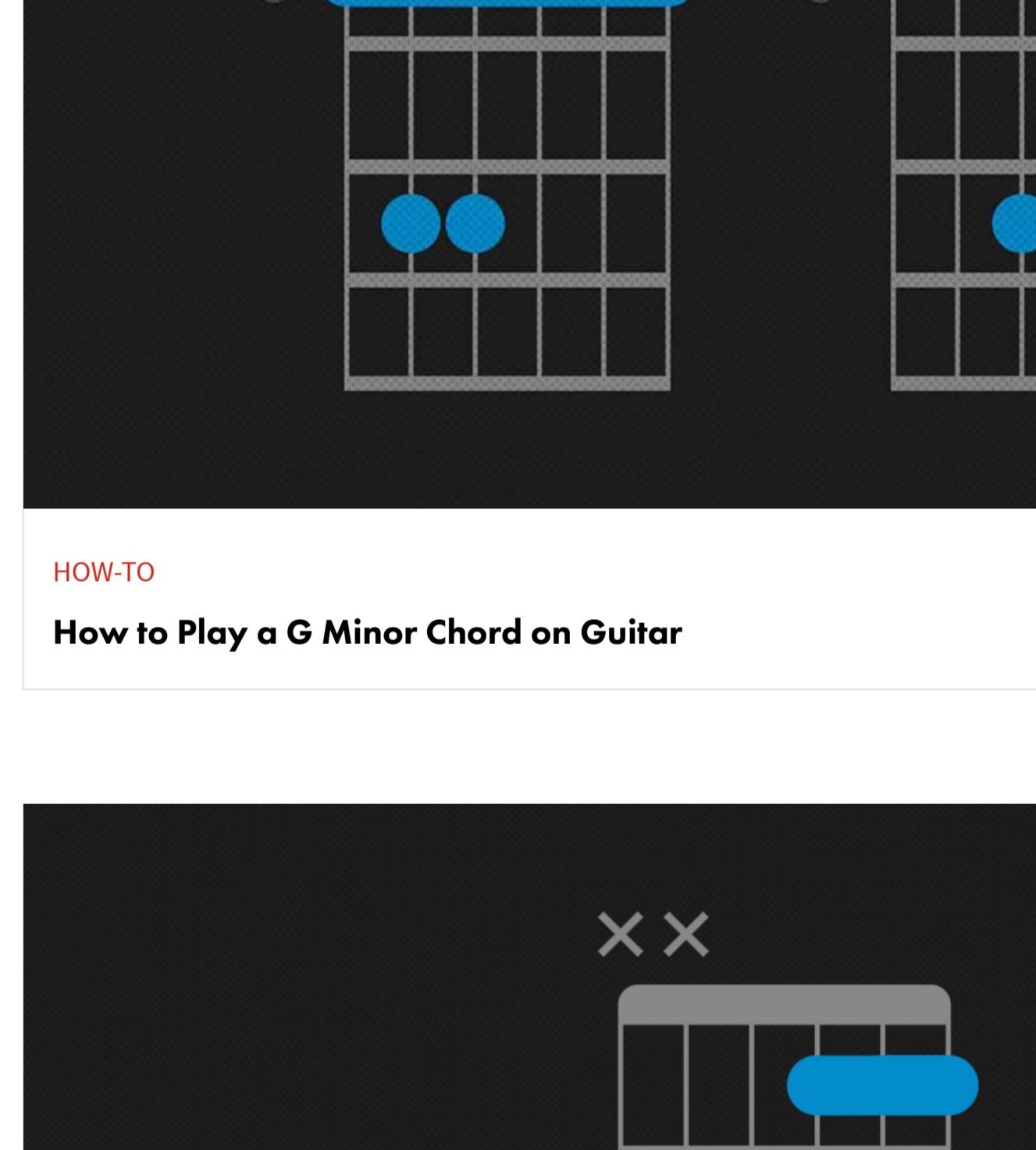
It's difficult to pin a single specific genre on Los Angeles-based band the Marias, but that's not a bad thing.

Take a listen through the group's stunning pair of EPs - *Superclean Vol. I* and *Superclean Vol. II* - and you'll get hints of psychedelic dream pop, sultry bossa nova, smooth R&B, bouncy funk and mellow jazz, providing the perfect bed for frontwoman María's hypnotic vocals (both in Spanish and English).

It's a polished package that came together through a seemingly fated meeting between the Puerto Rican-bred, Atlanta-raised María (who performs by given name only) and Los Angeles-based drummer/producer Josh Conway.

The duo formed in 2016 after crossing paths in L.A. at Laurel Canyon Music Revival series, where María was performing and Conway was running sound. María had been on the West Coast for just a few months after leaving a life studying film in Atlanta. Very quickly, they forged a dynamic musical partnership that melded their diverse influences and backgrounds.

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As their artistic connection grew, María and Conway decided to bring in friends Jese Perlman (guitar), Carter Lee (bass) and Edward James (keys), and released *Superclean Vol. I* in the fall of 2017. The debut EP garnered tremendous buzz in the Los Angeles scene first, and then further out as they embarked on a tour with the Strokes' [Albert Hammond Jr](#) and a stint at Coachella.

To María, the collaborative process is a key driver of the band.

"I think the reason why we have a band and it's not like a solo project for either of us is that we like the collaboration and the camaraderie of being in a group with our friends," said María. "Josh and I write and produce the songs together, and I think just having more than one take on an aspect of a song, whether it's a melody or production, it helps to bounce ideas off each other. It makes it different than what you could've come up with on your own."

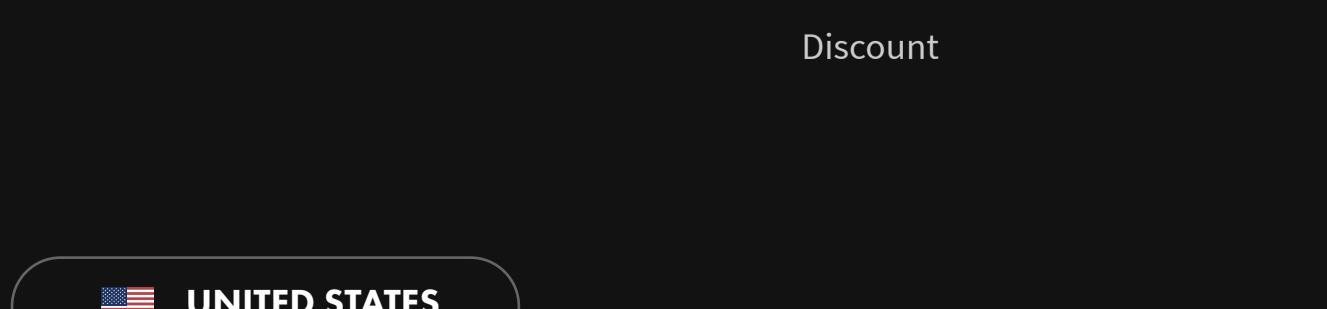
While not all of the Marias' songs may have a guitar prominently featured in the end product, it does play a significant role in the studio, where a simple chord progression can unlock something that morphs into the lush soundscapes they continually create.

"Maybe the song won't end up having any guitar on it, but if you have a guitar in the living room, you can just pick it up and quickly put chords and melody together," said Conway. "Guitar is very prominent in our writing process, for sure. It's the easiest thing to just pick up acoustically and figure things out."

"I'd say probably the most important instrument in our songwriting process is guitar," María concurred.

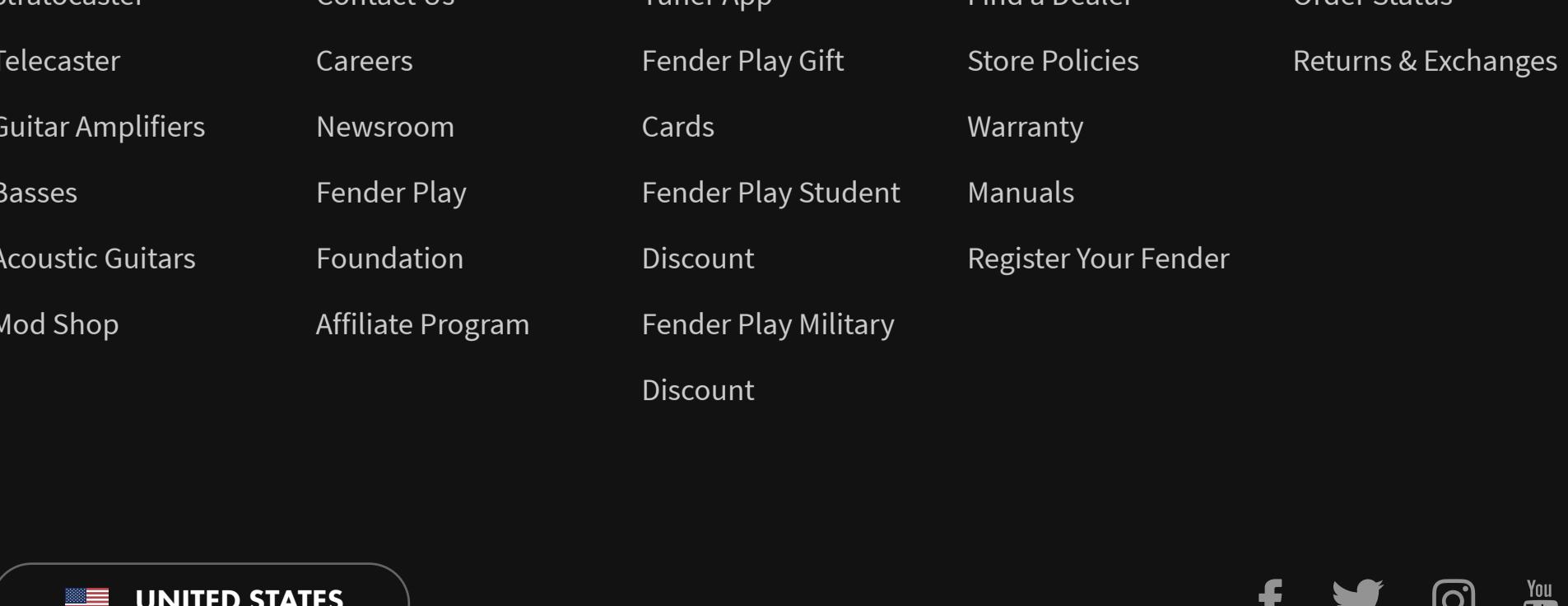
For now, the Marias are continuing to write ([check out their latest single, "Drip," a collaboration with New York's Triathalon, here](#)) and gear up for what is sure to be a big 2019.

[Find out more about the María here](#), and if you'd like to start your musical journey, you can get a free trial for Fender Play [here](#).



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