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In Rotation

Of the folk-based acoustic guitar virtuosos who captured the popular imagination in the 1960s and '70s — Richard Thompson, Davey Graham, the late Michael Hedges and the late John Fahey, among them — Wyoming-born and raised Leo Kottke is perhaps the most obtuse and reclusive. Though he tours ceaselessly and enjoys his success, he's not too interested in recording — a couple of recent collaborations with former Phish bassist Mike Gordon notwithstanding — and rarely talks to the media.

He communicates through his performances, densely packed affairs that showcase his distinctive, percussive thumb-based, flesh-on-steel finger-picking style — a technique he adopted after a debilitating bout with tendonitis forced him to abandon picks in the 1980s. One concert Kottke considers to be the best was filmed at Toronto's Bathurst St. Theatre in 1988, and has been re-assembled, re-packaged and re-released for the music DVD market as *Leo Kottke Home & Away Revisited* (Reconstructed Arts/MVD), at the same time as news arrives of his first concert here in more than a decade (June 10, Trinity-St. Paul's Centre, 427 Bloor St. W., \$35, \$42.50 at Roy Thomson Hall Box Office, 416-872-4255 or online at <http://www.roythomson.com>).

The DVD contains 17 flawlessly executed, acoustically magnificent musical pieces on six- and 12-string guitars (six songs have been added to the formerly aired TV version) and a similar number of Kottke's trademark folksy-Kafka-esque in-performance yarns and philosophical rants, as well as off-stage scenes in his guitar repository, driving around his property, and performing ad-hoc with mentors, the late Chet Atkins and Doc Watson. As a testament to his exceptional and quirky talent, there could be nothing better.

- Greg Quill