



Guitar World Acoustic

July 2007

EVERYBODY'S TALKIN'



ERIK MONGRAIN

YOUTUBE VIDEOS of 27-year-old Montreal guitarist Erik Mongrain, who plays with his acoustic in his lap, two-hand tapping his way through his instrumentals "AirTap!" and "Percusienfa" have made him an overnight sensation among guitarists and non-guitarists alike. But Mongrain is no one-trick pony. "I don't specialize in any particular technique or tuning," he says. "I want to taste everything I can."

Mongrain puts his money where his mouth is on his debut album, *Fates* (Prophase Music). He recorded most of the album with his guitar in the standard position, showcasing not only his virtuosic tapping but also a fingerpicking style that incorporates funky bass lines and explosive harmonics, and even some feisty flatpicking.

"I can get different textures, different rhythms, different colors," says Mongrain, who uses numerous tunings, many of his own devising. "I even mix techniques within the same song—I'll tap the introduction, fingerpick the verse and then strum the chorus with a flatpick."

Mongrain first became interested in music when, at 14, he saw Nirvana play "Heart-Shaped Box" on television. After learning "every Nirvana, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Metallica and Jimi Hendrix song I could," he moved on, first to classical guitar and then steel-string acoustic. A compilation CD introduced him to contemporary fingerstyle masters Don Ross, Laurence Juber and others, but his real epiphany came when he heard the playing of Michael Hedges.

"I was busking on the street when somebody told me I had to check him out," says Mongrain. "I got a copy of *Oracle*, and within ten seconds of hearing it I was in love." —Scott Nygaard

GUITARS

RainSong JM1000; Guild D55 (for lap tapping)

ELECTRONICS

Sunrise magnetic pickup; Fishman Prefix Stereo Blender; D-Tar Solstice preamp; AER acoustic amp