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- Pelican/Torche - Sheffield Corporation - 13 Sept 08
- Black Mountain, Wintersleep - MoHo, M/CR - 12 May 08
- Frank Turner - Joshua Brooks, M/CR - 15 April

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Opinion

- I am waiting with a child-like impatience
- It's been a long time...
- Weezer, why bother?
- Simmy Selects
- Longsdon's Top Threes
- Breen's Top Threes

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Interviews

- Tim And Eric Awesome Show, Great Job! - Part 1 of 3
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- Malcolm Middleton
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### Erik Mongrain - Equilibrium (Prophase Music)

Wednesday 29th October 2008



#### Michael Bates discovers a new guitar hero

Guitar albums can get very boring very quickly. I love Steve Vai and Joe Satriani, but even I admit that wanking up and down the scales like pro-dickhead Yngwie Malmsteen gets samey almost as fast as he runs through his arpeggios.

But what if there were guitar albums out there that are (brace yourself) *'fresh, interesting, original and imaginative'*? Well, Michael Hedges may have died last century but with Erik Mongrain's new record *'Equilibrium'*, you can enjoy the same sort of technically precise yet beautifully free acoustic joy once again without the new-age hippy image attached to it.

Those of you familiar with Erik Mongrain know what to expect. Those who aren't get a box of Kleenex ready and watch this.

Now you've had a crash course in Mongrain's fresh approach to guitar playing, you can understand that he doesn't release run-of-the-mill acoustic guitar records. Last year's 'Fates' was joyous yet contemplative and definitely one of the finest debut albums I've heard in a long time, however many acts struggle with album number two, so it was interesting to see how Erik would approach the new challenge.

Luckily Erik has shown some serious **cojones** and actually chosen (perhaps controversially) to not use the lap-tapping technique on this release. Instead **what we have is a more thoughtful and mature album using a traditional guitar posture in an experimental way.**

Finger-bleeding opener *A Ripple Effect* provides an exciting introduction before we lunge into the more relaxed core of the album with tracks like *Alone in the Mist*. Pieces such as *Equilibrium* and *Pandora's Box* both utilise the different percussive properties of the guitar body brilliantly whilst the melody is played throughout on one of Mongrain's (seemingly limitless) appendages.

Throughout the album, Erik provides us with piece after piece of perfectly formed chillout music. Unfortunately, Michael Manring's fretless bass on *Maelstrom* and *Alone in the Mist* somewhat overpowers these tracks so that you have to concentrate to hear exactly what the guitar is doing. The only other criticism I have for this album is that while *Fates* was multifaceted and fascinating title track are much more of a one-sided affair, dealing almost exclusively in down-tempo meditations. However, having only taken a year to write, record and release, it gains some kudos back for being so prompt.

Otherwise this is a lovely little album, and when you can download it for a measly £6, you'd be hard pressed to find a better bargain.

Let's face it; given the choice of helping a young talented musician like Mongrain out and getting 40 minutes of original music for your troubles or buying an old U2 record and making that wanker Bono even richer we know where the smart money would go. And for those retards who still think Bono looks good with his sunglasses and floppy hair head over to Erik's Youtube channel and watch him playing some of his new material before you damn yourself to musical purgatory.

8.0/10.0

by: Michael Bates

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#### Upcoming Gigs

- 18th November 2008
- Extreme
- The Notwist
- Low
- 23rd November 2008
- Opeth
- 27th November 2008
- Clique Clack presents: Papier Tigre
- 30th November 2008
- Gordon Gano's Army, Flamingo 50, Race To The Sea, The Cost Of Living - A special matinee show. Any band shamelessly displaying affection to Violent Femmes deserve your attention.

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