



# Equilibrium

[Erik Mongrain](#)

Available from [Amazon.com](#).

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange

by **Mark S. Tucker**

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Luckily, I'd viewed a couple of YouTube vids of this guy, else I'd've had a very difficult time with the allegation that several of the cuts here are indeed solo work. Yet it's true. Mongrain engages in what is called "laptapping" on an acoustic guitar, an extension of the doubletapping technique invented by Stanley Jordan, now used by every guitarist on the face of the Earth...well, almost. With laptapping, the guitar becomes a kind of ersatz koto and can be simultaneously strummed while lead runs are in action with both hands. Often, though, there are two distinct melodies, either in harmony or contrapuntally, more often the latter.

The emphasis on *Equilibrium* is not speed but rather depth of composition and complex interplay in concurrently running lines and chords. Mongrain took a shine to Bach and benefited accordingly, the ancient master's heady work saturating an approach going well beyond any traditional classical guitar role. In fact, with such players as this, it may well be time to announce that the classical guitar is pretty much dead as an innovative instrument, a beast now categorically antiquated, smothered by the conventions of its own latterday exponents clinging to Atlantean times. Any number of stringbenders are currently acing them.

Like Andy McKee, Mongrain also bodytaps, a percussive adjunct Tommy Emmanuel is the master of, Erik here taking from Michael Hedges. *Pandora's Box* is an outstanding example of his laptapping blended with bodytap for remarkable polish. A beautifully wistful half-dark composition, the degree of innovation on the cut is jaw-dropping, very much the next step after Leo Kottke's eternally daunting work. For the longest time, Kottke's been a unique **ne plus ultra** of the axe, extremely influential to the newest breed, but he's going to see himself usurped in his own lifetime, which I think will please the guitar god. After all, that's what evolution is, and few are ever able to see their progenitorship so richly transferred in such a decisive manner as Mongrain displays in each cut.

It's of note that he's appeared at the Montreux Jazz Fest twice now, the premier such venue in the world, and just as impressive that he can attract players like Michael Manring to this CD. The guy's also appeared many times on TV in Canada, Japan, and here in the States, so we're not talking about a young man (28) still working his way through the changes. He's arrived.

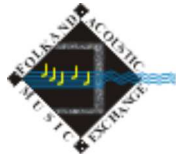
## Track List:

- A Ripple Effect
- Alone in the Mist
- Equilibrium
- Muse
- The Silent Fool
- Pandora's Box
- Eon's illusion
- Raindigger
- Maelstrom

All songs written by Erik Mongrain.

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