

<http://www.thisisnottingham.co.uk:80/entertainment/Music-Q-Erik-Mongrain/article-456594-detail/article.html>



My Music Q&A: Erik Mongrain
Friday, November 07, 2008, 07:30

THE French/Canadian guitarist was inspired early on by the work of Metallica, Jimi Hendrix, and Kurt Cobain but has since developed a style known as lap-tapping, whereby he lays the guitar on his lap and taps the strings on the fret board with both hands.

He first saw the technique on YouTube, in a video of his guitar hero Michael Hedges. "I was spellbound," he says.

"The complexity of his playing and his ability to create so many different sounds probably make him, in my opinion, the best guitarist in the world."

Mongrain, who has just released his second album *Equilibrium*, is in Nottingham this weekend.

What was your first record?

Queen's *Sheer Heart Attack*.

What are you currently listening to?

Sigur Ros, Dave Matthews Band, Mogwai and Michael Hedges.

What is your desert island disc?

Aerial Boundaries by Michael Hedges because it is THE greatest acoustic album ever made.

Which song do you wish you'd written?

Aerial Boundaries or Java Man by Michael Hedges.

Which song has had you in tears?

Too many to list really but I remember when I bought the first album by Michael Hedges (*Oracle*). I was in the store listening to it and 20 seconds into *The 2nd Law* I was in tears. It moved me in ways I cannot really put into words.

What is your guilty music pleasure?

None really – sorry to disappoint.

Which music makes you angry?

Any music that sounds like reproduction and that is far too common nowadays than I'd like it to be. There is a huge lack of creativity in the music industry, I think. Almost every band/artist sounds like another one in too many ways. The lack of effort makes me angry.

Who was your first gig?

I am not sure I remember. I think it was a restaurant in Montreal named Le Porte Disapru. We passed the hat at the end and I did make \$100. It was fun. That was ten years ago.

Which musician would you like to be?

Michael Hedges. He simply was a pioneer , the greatest creator that ever lived in my opinion. Much of what he composed makes me very jealous. His music was and still is from beyond the realms of humans. I wouldn't really consider even being close to Elvis or the Beatles as I never really enjoyed their music.

Erik Mongrain plays The Maze in Mansfield Road on Monday November 10. Tickets are £10 from the venue or www.gigantic.com.

SIMON WILSON

<http://www.frantikmag.com/08/811/cdnov08.html#erik>



Gian Erguiza - October 24, 2008



Erik Mongrain

Title: Equilibrium

Label: AlterEgo Musique/Prophase Music

Year: 2008

Rating: ★★★★★

Acoustically blessed and experimentally pleasing, Erik Mongrain's 'Equilibrium' is a wonderful trek into the world of guitar playing. A natural talent from Quebec Canada, Erik serves up some technical fretwork on his latest venture with added nobility and precision. One would really disagree upon the fact that he plays solo but indeed he does. Erik's 'laptapping' style give him the freedom to do adlib runs while holding down the rhythm or melody. This is an impressive style of guitar playing that not many guitar players in the world can do. With that said though, I wondered where all the leads went? For a guy with huge talent on the guitar, this album lacks the guitar leads. I get the whole direction of the album, concentrating on depth of the music instead of the song, but a little bit of guitar leads, even if he had to do a lead without laptapping, would've been just sweet. Aside from that, this album puts you in a state of trance and gives life to surroundings. After watchin a few YouTube videos of Erik, I instantly knew that this guy was the real deal. 'Equilibrium' is for those days where you want to relax while listening to music without words.



Sunday, November 9, 2008

[INTERVIEW: Erik Mongrain](#)



[Erik Mongrain](#) is described as a 'YouTube Sensation,' but I think that term does him a great injustice. To me it recalls images of Chris Crocker's "Leave Britney Alone!" speech, or the mysterious [Spaghetti Cat](#). What Mongrain does is so phenomenal that he was bound to be discovered sooner or later, YouTube or not. Erik's amazing new album, 'Equilibrium,' is out now and it features his unique tapping style, beautiful open tunings, and the bass talents of the legendary Michael Manning.

PETER: How did you develop your unique approach to guitar? It goes so far beyond the 'simultaneous rhythm and melody' style of so many other acoustic players.

MONGRAIN: I'd say Michael Hedges played a role there. His music was grand but his way of approaching music was all about creativity. When I read the book 'Rythm, Sonority and Silence' he did with John Stropes I understood many things. Maybe it can't apply to everyone but it really spoke to me. In short I understood that I was the one to decided if I wanted to create within limits and/or specialize in a specific technique/approach and I simply realized that I just wanted to try it all! For example if I

am working on a chorus of a certain song and have been working on it for weeks, even if I did find many possible chorus that are really nice , to me it is not the "right one" until I feel these shivers in my spine and that rush of deep satisfaction. The chorus of 'The Silent Fool' for example took me weeks to find. I had many other very good ones but that's the one I kept because it spoke to me way beyond any of the other ones. You could compare it to mining.. If you find a diamond you could stop there and be happy with it... I just choose to keep digging to find the mine itself!

PETER: Your playing is very rhythmic. Where does this inspiration come from?

MONGRAIN: From many places really, it never happens the same. It's all the results of music I hear , fusions of what I hear and listen to, ideas, feelings, etc.

PETER: How important is the setup of the guitar to how you play? Do you need your instruments specially modified to meet your demands?

MONGRAIN: The setup is important aye. Everything is important from the height of the bridge , height of strings at the bridge , height of bridge pins in their holes or if the pins are lacquered or not , the neck playability , neck relief , string gauge , overall action, nut slots height, saddle/nut material. No "weird" modification overall, just little things that when added up do make a huge difference to me.

PETER: What guitars do you use?

MONGRAIN: I have been using the Kingslight only for the past 8 months. Her name is Elora and it is the first guitar I ever named! I also own a PRS acoustic (prototype #16), a Stonebridge CM22, Stonebridge 12 strings, Guild D55 and a Rainsong JM1000.

PETER: 'Alone In The Mist' has some very sad, lonely-sounding chords. When you are writing, does the tuning dictate the chords and mood, or do you start with a mood in mind and look for the tuning?

MONGRAIN: It can happen either way really or may other ways. It's always different or a combination of many. The sweet secret of discovery, as Hedges used to say.

PETER: What was it like to work with the great Michael Manring on the album? Did you write parts for him? Did he write his own parts?

MONGRAIN: An honor really. I didn't write the part at all, I wouldn't even dare. I just let him go free for all and he did a great job. Since the day I composed 'Maelstrom' and 'Alone in the Mist' I heard some fretless bass played by Manring and am just happy it's complete now!

PETER: How did you come to record at Paul Reed Smith's Dragon Crossing studio?

MONGRAIN: I met Paul almost 2 years ago. He saw me on YouTube and invited me to

a breast cancer weekend event. He has a very nice studio and when the time came to record 'Equilibrium' he offered me to use it and I gladly accepted. He has great gears and the best sound engineer of all! (Bill Plummer)

PETER: The album has such a clear, natural sound. How did you achieve this? How did you record the guitars? It almost sounds like you're right there in the room with the listener.



MONGRAIN: Glad to hear it sounds nice! Bill did a very nice job all the way through and he is the guy you'd want to ask that question to, haha! We had 3 microphones placed in front of me that we did move around a bit and a subkick (forgot the exact name) on the side for the low end (see picture). Sorry I really can't remember the names and specs of these! I wanted a nice reverb for the mixing/mastering. My favorite is the old Lexicon PCM70 and that's what we used. I know Bill used a Fairchild parametric for the mastering and from what he and Paul told me that thing is rare! Sounds very good though, I am quite happy with the final sound. All I did is play to the best of my ability, Bill is the wizard here!

Main photo: Kenneth Stearns