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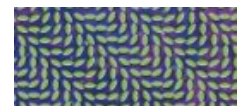
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LIVE LISTINGS
REVIEWS
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Erik Mongrain

With over three million views on YouTube and 11,000 plus MySpace friends Erik Mongrain is something of an internet phenomena. Most of us, who have followed this talented young guitarist's career to date, first became acquainted with him via a clip on YouTube (if you don't know his work we suggest you watch it [here](#) before continuing with the feature) and his excellent debut album *Fates* released in 2007. He has since gone on to perform all around the world and released a second, equally fine, album entitled *Equilibrium* late last year, so we thought it was high time we got the lowdown on his career to date, beginning with a query about his family background, and whether this talent was genetically passed on?

Erik Mongrain: "Not particularly. I know my father does many forms of art but I never really got to know him. One of my uncles is a music teacher and they all played a bit of piano on that side of the family from what I remember but none of them is living from music the way I am living from music really. I wasn't surrounded with music all that much, except for the morning/evening radio playing at home."

Total Music: Most teenage boys who play electric guitar would run a mile from classical music, what drew you to composers like Bach?

Erik Mongrain: "I've always loved medieval/renaissance things so obviously when I heard Bach played on guitar it simply struck me as utterly beautiful. It looked hard to play and was challenging and I just had the sudden urge to learn all of it."

Total Music: Many of today's guitarists would list people like Hendrix as an influence, but not so many Don Ross or Michael Hedges, what was it about them that appealed?

Erik Mongrain: "Don Ross had this unique fingerstyle approach which I really liked and it was all new to me. I went deeper in open tunings from there and did learn many of his songs. His rhythmic and string/right-hand beats were pretty cool. Michael Hedges is the main influence of my life though. He remains, in my opinion, the only guitar player that was always different and creative. He never used the same approach twice whether it's the texture, rhythmic, tunings, technique, colors... Every song is a masterpiece of creativity. I base most of what I compose on that idea, which is to try at all cost to not repeat myself."



Total Music: The 'wow' factor (breakneck shredding etc) can often disguise a lack of ideas and real emotional depth, just how important is technical ability?

Erik Mongrain: "In my opinion technique is only a tool like everything else. The 'wow' factor is nice yeah but in the end what matters is the music. I'd rather have people feel strong emotions and travel in their minds when they hear my music than have them go 'Wow, man, can he play fast and without errors!' I prefer to be a guitar player who gives people inner voyages. If that includes making a couple of mistakes in a show or not being the most accurate guitarist out there, so be it! One note [can be] worth a thousand"

Total Music: What prompted you to start playing the guitar on your lap, it must have been almost like learning the instrument all over again?

Erik Mongrain: "Laptapping is only one of the things that I do really. Out of 12-14 tunes in a gig I'll most likely play only one in that fashion. I started playing like that about 10 years or so ago when I saw some guy doing it in the streets and decided to try it on my own. It's not really like learning the instrument all over again though, it's just different."



Total Music: How important has the internet been to you for reaching prospective fans?

Erik Mongrain: "Very important. It is an amazing tool to get your name out there and it has played a major role."

Total Music: The liner notes for several tracks on the new album allude to the break down of a relationship. Is this music your way of dealing with lost love?

Erik Mongrain: "Is there anything more grand than love? Not in my opinion. Love and women (or a certain one in particular) is a great source of inspiration and it often came into play for composition in the last 2-3 years. I wouldn't say the album is a way of dealing with lost love, more like a way to express what needs to be expressed beyond words. There are a few tracks about love, but many more are observations about life itself."

***Equilibrium** and **Fates** are both available now on [Wienerworld](http://Wienerworld.com), and you can find out more info about Erik at www.erikmongrain.com*

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