



ADRIAN LEGG

Inheritance

Since the 1990 release of his first U.S. recording *Guitars and Other Cathedrals*, Adrian Legg has more than lived up to the expectations stirred by an ongoing avalanche of praise from critics, fans, top guitar mags and peers alike. Joe Satriani once said, "He's simply the best acoustic guitar player I've ever heard...he plays like he has hammers for fingers." The genius that the Boston Globe has called "technical brilliance paired with a troubadour's tale-weaving skill" led him from 1993-96 to be voted Best Fingerstyle Guitarist four years straight by the readers of *Guitar Player* magazine. On ***Inheritance***, his second release for Favored Nations and ninth overall, Legg blends his extraordinary virtuosity on the acoustic with a lush sonic arena that harkens back to the musical textures of his childhood life before the guitar.

A colorful mix of gentle contemplative ballads, snappy and percussive jams, rock-edged electricity and hints of folk music, Irish jig and traditional church music influences, ***Inheritance*** marks a radical contrast from the unadorned, minimal production approach of the London born guitarist's rootsy 2003 label debut *Guitar Bones*.

The raw, swampy blues of "Nefertiti - What A Sweetie!" contrasts beautifully with the wistful grace of "My Blackbird Sings All Night" and "A Waltz For Leah." The high energy modern rock-fusion improv of "More Fun In The Swamp" (featuring, as John Diliberto's liner notes say, "a drunkenly delirious slur of lines that slip and slide like Jim Carrey at a taffy pull") is balanced with the ancient English hymn and joyful Irish traditions of the hypnotically played "Doublejigs" and the lyrical spirituality of "Psalm With No Words" and the annunciatory "Decree." Legg tells other remarkable stories via the moody atmospheres of "English Blue," the plucky determination of "The Good Soldier" (an ode to his maternal grandfather, who was blinded in the Somme during World War I) and the gently swaying "Emneth," dedicated to his maternal great grandfather, long ago the choirmaster at St. Edmund's in Emneth, Norfolk. And when Legg unveils his unabashedly romantic side, as he does on the lush, dreamy "Nail Talk," the touches of melancholy can move even the most stoic listener to genuine tears.

Communicating impressions of his background and early environment, Legg says the music on ***Inheritance*** is a chronicle of "where I came from, where I am now and what I leave. I wanted to look back to before the guitar arrived in my own life as well as what has happened since and beyond it."

He achieves this by creating a studio recording sound reflective of his live performances. "Some artists have problems reproducing their recorded sound live, but my problems are the other way around, that is, actually recording the live sound as well as it works onstage," says Legg, a popular international touring attraction who has recently performed in France, the U.K. and Japan in addition to his 3-4 month annual slate in the U.S.

"This is the first time my current stage sound has been recorded directly as it sounds live," he adds. "'Nail Talk,' 'The Good Soldier,' 'Decree,' 'Emneth' and 'Psalm Without Words' were done this way in single takes, the guitar and the synths (the latter played simultaneously, directly from the guitar) all down at once exactly as they work on stage. "'Decree' takes it all a stage further. I used live processing to remove the attack transient from the guitar so that it is less obviously a guitar. Although we may look fondly on the simple acoustic instrument, and while it still has a sweet little voice, the mechanical and technical opportunities offered by this constantly evolving instrument are there to be enjoyed by any artist who wants a broader palette."

Two well traveled press quotes perfectly summarize the penetrating musical realm of Adrian Legg. "Like all genuine originals," says Todd Allison of acousticmusicresource.com, "Legg is tough to categorize." And back in 2000, the year after the guitarist released his second Red House Records disc *Fingers & Thumbs*, the Philadelphia Enquirer enthused, "There are guitarists, there are axe-wielding maniacs, and then there are wizards. Adrian Legg is one of the wizards. He has enough technique to do just about anything he wants, but also the sensitivity to honor the contours of a melody."

The accolades have come nonstop since *Guitars and Other Cathedrals*, the first of five releases on Relativity Records, tweaked the ears of guitar fans everywhere in 1990. 1993's *Wine, Women and Waltz* was selected by the readers of Guitar Player magazine as Best Overall Guitar Album in the 1994 Reader's Poll. He earned Best Acoustic Album in this same poll in 1992 and 1993, respectively, for *Guitar For Mortals* (1992) and *Mrs. Crowe's Blue Waltz* (1993). Readers of England's Guitarist magazine voted Legg Acoustic Guitarist of the Decade in the magazine's 10th anniversary poll. Over the years, he's played at the Montreux Jazz Festival and toured with Richard Thompson, David Lindley, Joe Satriani, Eric Johnson and as part of the G3 Tour featuring Satriani, Johnson and Favored Nations founder Steve Vai.

He's also shared the wealth of his talent and experience with three teaching videos (*Beyond Acoustic Guitar, Fingerpicking & Open Tunings, How To Cheat At Guitar*) and two books—the technical *Customizing Your Electric Guitar* (Music Sales Corporation) and the musical "Pickin' and Squintin'" (Cherry Lane Music), a collection of Legg's guitar compositions in tablature and standard notation. In recent years, he has also been a commentator at large for National Public Radio's *All Things Considered*, and more recently, regular listeners have heard his guitar versions of the show's theme music.

Born in the Salvation Army Hospital in Hackney, London, Legg is a classic mongrel Londoner, with the long mixed East End blood of entrepreneurial Huguenot and Jewish refugees topped up from a sturdy line of East Anglian farmers; a fertile genetic stew mixed further with Welsh, West Indian and Philippino in his grandchildren.

While studying oboe under parental pressure (his own words), he began fashioning his own guitars, "or rather odd stringed instruments that at least could execute an acceptable twang" from pictures in newspapers, scraps from the school woodwork scrap bin, fret wire and with strings held on by head rest cover containers taken from the local bus station. While working at the airport in Liverpool, he met a young man who invited him to join a band and introduced him to country music.

After two years of working in Liverpool working men's social clubs, he hitch-hiked back to London, where he played electric guitar in clubs and joined up with bands that eventually traveled outside the U.K. A demand from a band leader that he use an acoustic to play loud chords up against a mic for one number nudged him towards the acoustic as a separate instrument.

As popular as his catalog of recordings is, Legg's true home is onstage. "Playing live is the whole point," he says. "Everyone makes a journey, an effort; we all come together – me, the audience, the people who run the venue – to share this wonderful, universal, human emotional interaction. This is where music lives."

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