

Acoustic music with a groove. Progressive folk. Heavy Wood. Mike Morris defies the stereotype of the solo acoustic musician. With bluesy vocals and bass-heavy guitar playing, performed on 6- and 12-string guitars, his sound moves effortlessly from folk and blues to rock and rap. With a distinctive percussive style that sets him apart from other solo artists, Mike turns the guitar into a kick drum, using slaps, pops and harmonics in a way few solo performers do. "The acoustic guitar is an incredibly expressive instrument," he says, "and yet there's something so simple about it. The electric guitar may have changed the world, but the acoustic guitar keeps it turning. "

Mike has recently released his debut CD, "What Have I Done?", recorded live in the studio. From the liner notes to the CD: "I'd like to say it's about possibilities: the past, the present, the future. I'd like to say it's about how we live: by choice, by change, by chance. But mostly, it's a collection of songs. 12 stolen moments, just me and a guitar. A little folk, a little funk, a little rap, some other junk."

Born in El Paso, Texas, raised in New Hampshire, Mike grew up around music. "When I was five, my mother turned to me during a

bridge game and asked if I'd like to take piano lessons. I was already in a band, with my brother, where we'd fake sing along with Beatles' records, and I wondered why I needed to actually learn to play when faking it was so much fun." He studied the piano for several years, took up the trumpet in his teens, and settled on the acoustic guitar in his 20s. "Strangely enough, it was the Blues Brothers that really turned me on to the possibilities of performing. I still love a good horn section. From there I discovered blues artists like Willie Dixon, Robert Johnson, Howlin' Wolf. Once I picked up the acoustic guitar, it led me to entertainers like Taj Mahal, Loudon Wainwright and Mojo Nixon, singer-songwriters whose energy and passion could never be captured on a record. These were live performers."

As any who have seen Mike Morris perform know, it is his live show that sets him apart from other singer-songwriters. His guitar playing has drawn comparisons to Michael Hedges, the radical innovator whose multiple tunings and funky larger-than-life sound elevated the acoustic guitar to a new level. His singing, called both "powerful" and "intimate," has been likened to Peter Gabriel and Dave Matthews. Says Morris: "Those are kind words, perhaps too kind. I think my music is the sum of everything and

everyone I've ever heard. I can only hope I've added something of my self into the mix."

Comparisons aside, perhaps it is his sense of humor and improvisational skills that make Mike Morris a true original. "I'd like every night to be something new. I'd like people to go home feeling better than when they walked in. If we can share a song and a laugh towards that end, I'm a happy man. If I fall on my face in the process, at least we all fall together. I've tried everything from children's theater and dinner shows to rock operas and summer stock. I even played guitar in a penguin's suit, which is hard with flippers. In the end I always came back to one man, one guitar. It's all about communicating. About passion. About something we can all share. The white noise of life can be pretty overwhelming sometimes, and I like to think music, especially live music, can transcend our differences and bring us all closer together, if only for one evening, one song, or one moment."