

## Manning – review of “AKOUSTIK” (Progressive Archives)

One of the most impressive aspects of Guy Manning's career to date has been his highly prolific work rate and the quality he applies to his music. Over the past decade and a bit, Manning have released twelve studio albums, the last was the impressive follow up to the 2006 family saga, "Anser's Tree", entitled "Margaret's Children".

2012 looked like it was the year when Manning hit the road with the band and yet he has still found the time to record and release his new album, "Akoustik", a full set of stripped down, acoustically arranged numbers from his vast range of songs.

The inner sleeve notes reveal that in fact Guy and the band have been working on a new album but this is not yet ready. It seems that it was the right time to let the new material breathe for a little longer during a busy tour. A factor that may figure in the shape of the new material is the fact that Manning is undergoing a personnel change with guitarists Kevin Currie and Chris Catling leaving the group. Guy has announced the gap will be filled with a single guitarist and this will no doubt provide a new side to the music to come.

Akoustik is a great album for a lazy Sunday. It has a delightfully relaxed vibe and would suit a quiet moment with a chance to watch the rain come down from the warmth of your home. The timing of the release couldn't be better as there are some lovely autumnal shades to the work.

The tracks are beautifully realised as acoustic numbers and it almost seems that the original versions had their acoustic counterparts hidden within them and Guy and the band have stripped away the layers to expose them. There are no grand prog elements to the songs, and Guy has chosen the tracks that best suit a non electric feel. Instead the folky soft tones are present with a flavour of Celtic seasoning running through it.

The only slight criticism I have would be the minimal packaging although this could be a little pedantic, however past releases from the band have spoiled us with superb accompanying booklets.

I can very much recommend this as an extra purchase for the fan of Manning, it has a lot to offer. For the new listener the starting point should be the albums mentioned above or one of many available

**\*\*\*\* Stars (Treebeard)**