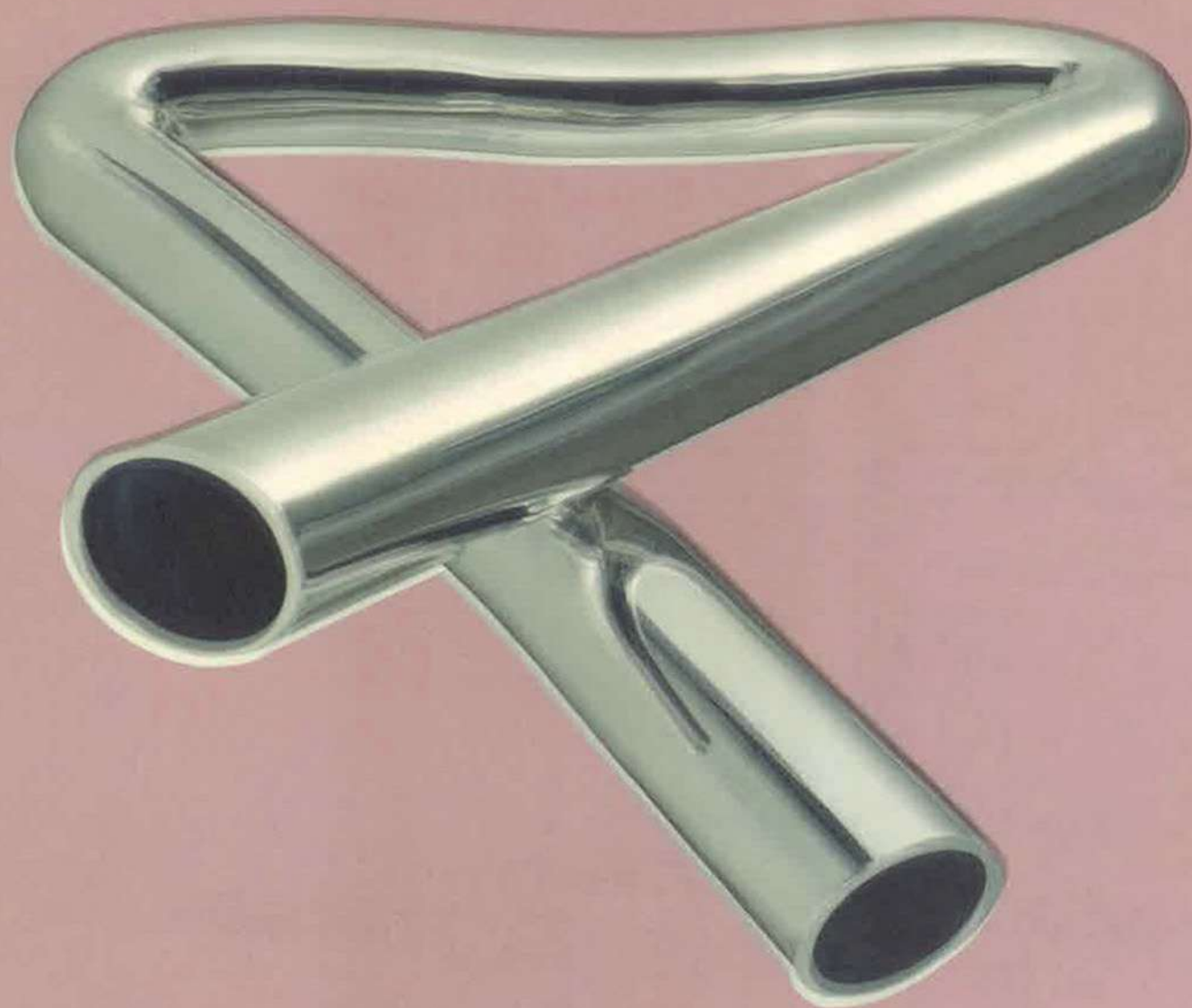


Mike Oldfield Then and Now





Mention Tubular Bells to almost anyone and the name Mike Oldfield immediately springs to mind. Yet the instrument itself holds no fascination for Mike, and they appeared on the ground breaking album simply because they just happened to be in a studio in Abbey Road when he was hiring instruments at the start of the recording sessions. The fact that it was against all odds that the album appeared at all, having been rejected by all the major record companies, and relying on catching a lift, building a new studio, starting a new record label...is another story. Tubular Bells of course saw the making of Richard Branson, the Virgin empire, and the start of a unique musical journey which has taken Mike through the instrumental epics of the 70's, the rock influenced albums of the early 80's, the hit searching songs of the late 80's and the incredible diversity of his musical output in the 90's.

This most recent period has seen Mike produce the critically acclaimed 60 minute track called Amarak, an incredible piece played entirely by hand, which unfortunately is Mike's least commercially successful album; the final album for Virgin, Heavens Open, and the revisiting of Tubular Bells not once, but twice, with a new recording and arrangement of the original released as II and the strongly Ibiza and club influenced Tubular Bells III completing the trilogy. Tubular Bells III is almost a completely new composition borrowing very little from the original - including a variation of the famous tinkling piano arpeggios, the Piltown Man and the voice introducing the final Bell sequence.

When asked why he went back to Tubular Bells Mike said "...its like it keeps returning to me, rather than the other way around". In between Tubular Bells II and Tubular Bells III, the Arthur C Clarke science fiction book "The Songs of Distant Earth" inspired the album of the same name, and was followed by the Celtic influenced album Voyager.

Travel has played a big part in influencing Mike's music, Tubular Bells III particularly reflects this. "It was the whole experience of building a house in Ibiza, of living in Ibiza, knowing the people there, having some good times, some bad times. It's a great challenge to actually live in an island community. There are some great people and some really not so great people there. I went through the lowest I've been for many many years in terms of my psychological well-being, and I also had some of the best times I have ever had there. That's a really powerful experience and perhaps the highs and lows of Tubular Bells III reflect the last few years."

In spite of travelling and living abroad, Mike feels most at home "...in the studio, and that can be anywhere, even if I set up a portastudio on a veranda somewhere in the tropics, that's home. I'm home when I'm in my world of sound."

With 2 years of work on the Tubular Bells III album, and a hugely successful world premiere under his belt, it would have been reasonable to have expected Mike to take some time off, travel and maybe plan his next projects. We are fortunate that both with his latest album Guitars and this tour that this has not been the case. It was clear from the nature of Tubular Bells III that Ibiza had had a strong influence on Mike and the music he produced whilst he was there. "Everywhere you go in Ibiza you are bombarded with dance music in the clubs, in the streets, in the car, on the radio." Perhaps in an attempt to cleanse out his Ibizan experiences, Mike went straight back into the studio and back to basics, to write and record Guitars, "a total guitar album...<which> was a lot more fun than sitting around and programming a Macintosh for months on end."

This break from computers afforded Mike the opportunity to use his guitars in a way in which he feels he most effectively expresses his sentiments. Many of the tracks are marked with a simplicity and emotive expression not seen in an Oldfield album for some time. This stripped down approach characterised the manner in which the album was put together - just Mike, supported by the talented engineer Ben Darlow who is also working with Mike on his new projects - more of which later.

Although this was a return to his principal instrument, the guitar, for which he is well known and respected, Mike once again embraces the latest technology including sequenced midi guitars and the new guitar synthesiser systems in addition to the live acoustic and electric guitar parts and individual guitar samples to construct the layers of sounds. "There's a Roland VG8 which plugs straight into my PRS (Paul Reed Smith), which has got a special pickup and with that I can have any sound instantly there. It's a virtual guitar system, so you have virtual amplifiers and virtual microphones, change virtual pickups and different guitars and you do it all in the computer software, so you don't have to fiddle around for hours getting a guitar sound, there's several hundred in there already. They can be bass guitars, 12 string guitars, mandolin, banjos, acoustic guitars, and also the midi system's much better now so I can use the guitar to play synthesisers, strings and all these things."

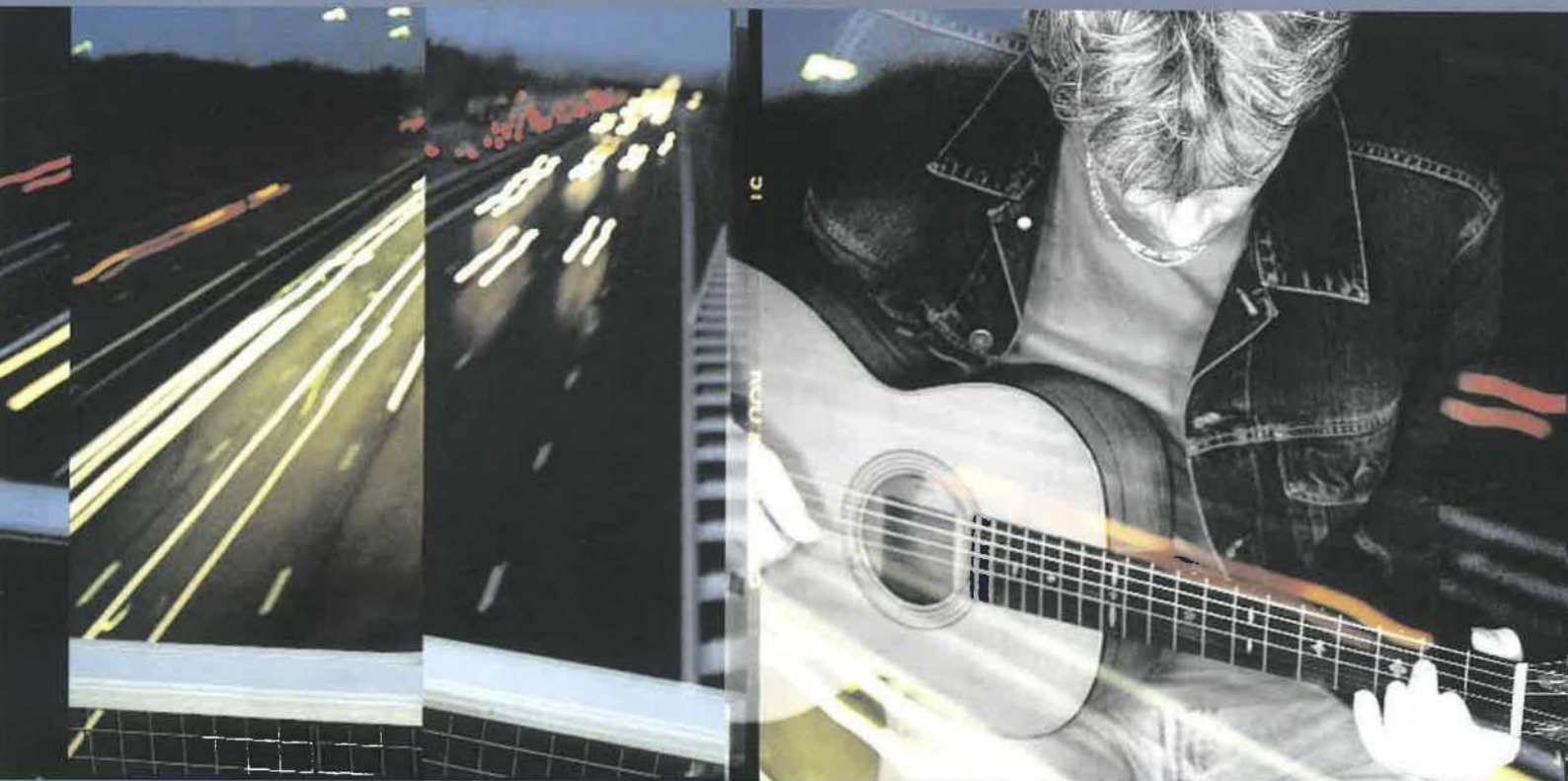




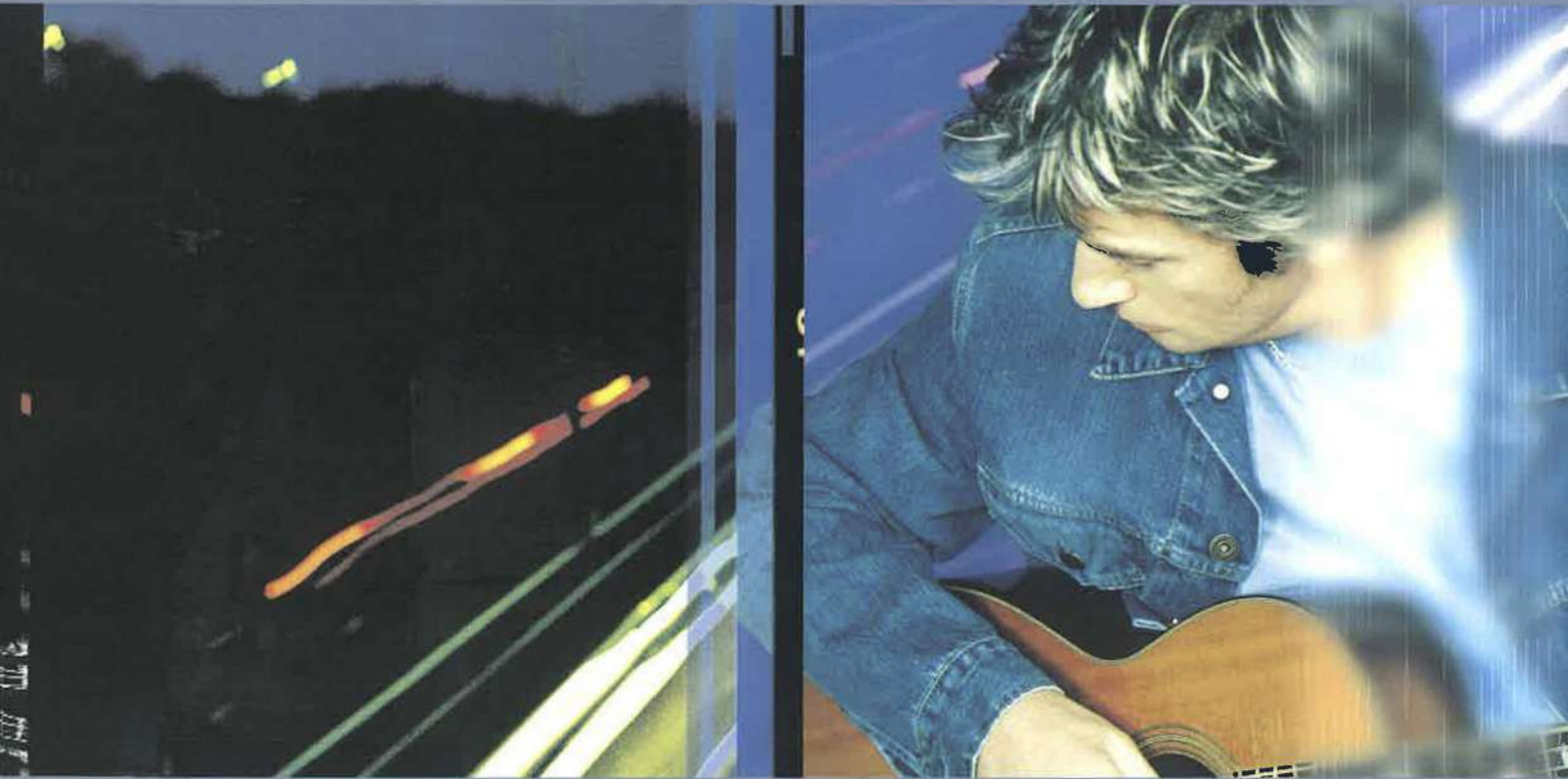
It is widely recognised that Mike has an amazing propensity to be able to pick up and turn his hand to competently play almost any instrument, but this album will certainly surprise some people who are under the impression that Mike is principally a keyboard player. "I think it's because when I play guitar I don't move my fingers very much. I play basically with my fingernails, so I've got five plectrums, and the sound that comes out is the harmonies, the bass line and the chords - it's all there in one guitar, and it's not like normal guitar playing. I don't do big power chords and make a big show of it, but the technique is there. Not wanting to sound my own trumpet, it's just more advanced than people are used to, so it's not considered guitar playing. It's like classical guitar really but with the electric guitar. There are guitarists, good ones, who instantly know who I am, like Dave Gilmour would instantly know it's me playing guitar, but the average music critic would say you're not playing guitar - that must be at least five people."

Mike continues to enhance his vast reputation for innovation and experimentation throughout the album's 10 atmospheric tracks.

The emotive, melodic, acoustic opener *Muse* is a wonderful piece, simplistic in its construction, brilliant in its execution and is followed by the pulsating *Cochise*, which is loosely based on the first 2 bars of Led Zeppelin's *Whole Lotta Love*. *Embers* is a melancholic piece which was actually the first track recorded for the album, using one of Mike's most treasured instruments, a classical Spanish guitar by the world renowned guitar maker, Ramirez. John Krakauer's best seller *Into Thin Air* provided the inspiration for *Summit Day*, a term used by mountaineers to describe the day in which the final push to the summit is made. Having cranked up the volume to immerse oneself in the first four tracks, *Out Of Sight* will make you jump as the album takes an upturn in tempo with a jazzy, rocky number.



Early tentative plans for the album were for a collection of guest artists; B. Blues is Mike's own interpretation of the style of the legendary B. B. King. The enigmatic Four Winds is a piece - actually four pieces - about the four winds. The North wind is harsh, with driving, abrasive electric guitars which contrasts strongly with the South wind which has a long lazy hot summer's day ambience. The East wind is more up-beat and has Asian undertones with samples from sitar, whilst the West wind could easily be a soundtrack to a Wild West epic. Enigmatism signals a return to the acoustic guitar - a lilting almost eerie piece which clears the mind, quite literally, for rocking, Rolling Stones influenced Out of Mind. The final track, From The Ashes, is actually a reprise of the Embers theme but with an added Celtic finale.



This tour will be the first opportunity to play some of these pieces in a concert setting, and will be Mike's first live appearances since the widely acclaimed world premiere of Tubular Bells III at Horse Guards Parade, London in September 1998. Mike's last series of live shows were to promote Tubular Bells II in 1993 when he played a number of dates in the UK, Europe and the USA.

Taking his music out on the road is something that Mike relishes. "Playing live for me really makes it all worthwhile, because quite often in the studio I am sitting in an antiseptic environment. OK, I might have an engineer, but there is nobody to react, apart from myself. I love making music, but once I have finished it I want to give it out to people. It's different giving a CD to somebody and them going off and listening to it, and standing up in front of a band with a big audience playing it and listening to the reaction".

Once again, Mike has assembled a group of very capable musicians, some of whom played with him at the Tubular Bells III premiere concert.



Adrian Thomas - Musical Director, Keyboards and Guitars

Adrian first played keyboards for Mike on the Tubular Bells 2 tour in 1993. He is a composer in his own right, writing for film and television. His credits as a music producer range from BBC's The Trials of Life and Life in the Freezer to the feature films: The Madness of King George, The Fisher King, Land and Freedom and Heaven's Prisoners. He has composed the scores for several documentaries, theatre productions and two films for the BBC. Adrian is currently writing and producing an album with members of The Dufay Collective, an early music ensemble.

Pepsi Demacque - Vocals

Starting her career as a session singer, Pepsi was launched into the limelight as a singer with one of the most successful bands of the 80's, Wham!. Pepsi continued her success as half of the duo Pepsi and Shirley who achieved Top Ten success throughout England and Europe. Since that time Pepsi has gone on to work as an actress in theatre in London's West End and in films. She is excited to be singing again on tour with Mike Oldfield.



Carrie Melbourne - Bass Guitars and Chapman Stick

Carrie's first professional engagement as a bass player was with Babylon Zoo who scored a worldwide No. 1 hit with Spaceman in 1996. In the summer of 1997 she joined international trip-hop artist Tricky, for the Lollapalooza tour of the USA, and subsequently for his Angels with Dirty Faces tour of 1998. The Tubular Bells III premiere concert at Horse Guards Parade in London was the first time that she played for Mike, playing bass guitar and the distinctive 10 stringed Chapman Stick. She has her own band Melbourne with her husband Doug, who have recently released their first album Indian Ocean on Mystic Records.

Claire Nicolson - Keyboards and Guitars

Claire Nicolson has been playing keyboards, guitar, and singing for most of her life. She's also the member of a backing vocal group called The Humming Birds and has recorded and performed with bands such as Catatonia, Kula Shaker, Texas and Tom Jones. Claire also writes her own material and is currently forming a band of her own.





Fergus Gerrand - Drums / Percussion

Having endured mixed success with his own band Wild Weekend and then with Bassomatic in the late eighties, Fergus turned to playing for others. He was the drummer with Duran Duran on their world wide tour between 1992 and 94, and then toured on numerous occasions playing percussion with Take That, East 17 and Human League. He has contributed to the recent Madonna album Ray of Light. Since finishing an eighteen month promotional and touring jaunt with The Spice Girls in late '98 he has toured with drum n' bass exponent Adam F and has just returned from a European tour with Vanessa Mae and the international chamber orchestra.

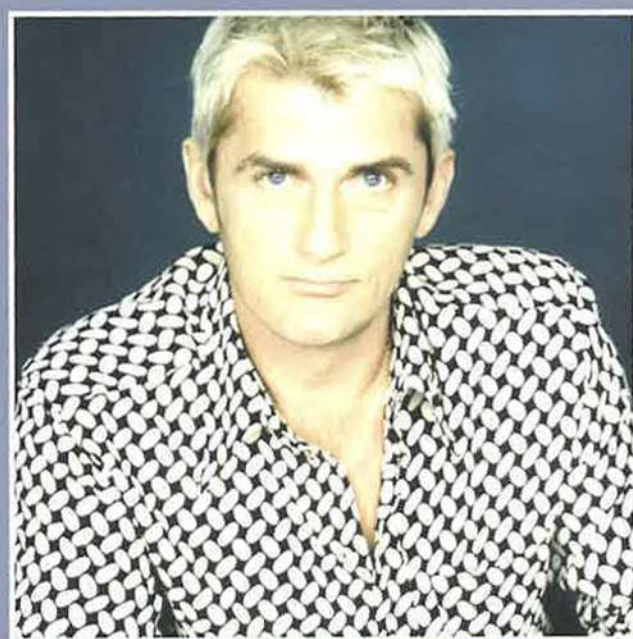
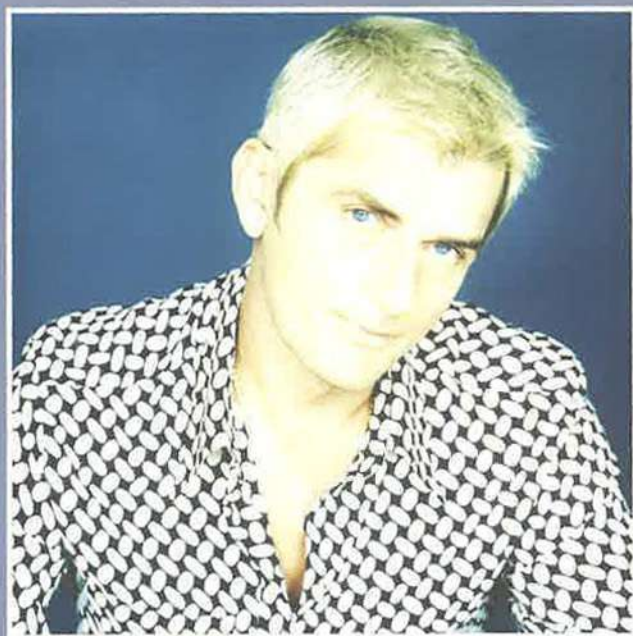
Caroline Monk

PA to Mike Oldfield - otherwise known as Mad Cow.



Tonight they will be playing selections from the new Guitars album, extracts from Tubular Bells III, The Songs of Distant Earth and Voyager, plus some other pieces from Mike's extensive back catalogue.





Recording a new album and putting together a 32 date tour would be enough to tax most people to exhaustion and drive them into taking a long long holiday. Mike however, has continued working. With the Millennium just around the corner, he is working to a punishing schedule writing and recording his album for the Millennium, which we can expect to hit the shops just in time for the celebrations. The album charts key events from the last 2000 years and sets these to music - including the birth of Christ, the Incas, King Arthur and Excalibur, and the second world war - as well as a piece for the future - the new Millennium. It marks yet another innovation for Mike and promises to be yet another remarkable chapter in the incredible musical journey of Mike Oldfield.

Also on the horizon is the possibility of continuing work on a second audio visual project, far far grander in scale than The Songs of Distant Earth CD-ROM material. This project features a virtual reality world with 12 interactive levels and accompanying music. A lot of effort has already gone into this project, but it was put on the backburner because at the time work started, "...it was just too early to think about it. It's a lot of work and you need a lot of people, a lot of time, and a lot of equipment, although the equipment's getting cheaper now, because you can get it on PC's, you don't have to have Silicon Graphics machines any more. I hope I can get the financial backing, which is what it would take, to do my virtual reality project for the year 2000."

Mike Oldfield is a true musical genius - his music, variety, inspiration and creativity are without comparison. The future promises many more wonderful creations from the highly gifted musician for which we can but wait.

Paul Harris, Dark Star



Credits

Mike Oldfield	MD/Keyboards & Guitars
Adrian Thomas	Vocals
Pepsi Demacque	Keyboards and Guitars
Claire Nicolson	Bass and Chapman Stick
Carrie Melbourne	Drums and Percussion
Fergus Gerrard	
Maggie Mouzakitis	Tour Manager
Caroline Monk	PA to Mike Oldfield
Trevor Farthing	Band Bus Driver
William 'Pitso' Pirie	Production/Stage Manager
Suzy Bird	Production Assistant
Colin Norfield	FOH Sound Engineer
Ian Newton	Monitor Engineer
Adey Wilson	Backline Technician
Vincent Barker	Backline Technician
Nick Sizer	Backline Technician
Clint Lockyer	Backline Technician
Mikey Howard	Lighting Designer
Christian Schmidt	PA Tech
Jakob Kraft	PA Tech
Scottie Sanderson	Lighting Tech
Dennis Brown	Lighting Tech
Niall Ogilvy	Lighting Tech
Andrew Jupp	Rigger
Jodi Fitzsimmons	Caterer
Royston Lyons	Caterer
Jessica Fischer	Merchandiser
Tom Sibthorpe	Crew Bus Driver
Malcolm Vayro	Crew Bus Driver
Les Martin	Truck Driver
Tony Allard	Truck Driver
Gary Fleming	Truck Driver
Touring Company	Jeremy Parker for Oldfield Music Overseas Ltd
Production Coordination	Peter Edmonds for Field Star Ltd
Agent	John Giddings for Solo
Travel	Alan Gordon for Danbury Travel
Sound	Udo Walters/Matthias Klette for Westfalen Sound GmbH
Trucking	Mark Gutierrez for TransAm Trucking
Bussing	Paul Hattin/Dougie Hammet for Phoenix Coaches
Freighting	Martin Corr for Soundmoves (UK) Ltd
Catering	Kim Davenport for Eat Your Hearts Out !
Merchandising	Justin Smith/Wayne Clarke for Blue Grape Ltd
Itineraries/Passes	Jo Willoughby for Publicity and Display Ltd
Insurance	Willie Robertson for Robertson Taylor
Accountants	Andrew Bennett-Smith for Ross, Bennett-Smith
Walkie Talkies	Lynn Martin for Radio Links Communications Ltd
Programme	Zoe Alexander/Dunc@n* Hewitson for Blue Grape Ltd
Programme Text	Paul Harris for Dark Star
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For subscription details please contact Dark Star, PO Box 2031, Blandford, DT11 9YB, England.
Fax: +44(0)1258 452032 Email: info@mikeoldfield.org Website: www.mikeoldfield.org

