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JANUARY 2015 NEWSLETTER

WELCOME TO PEERLESS JANUARY 2015 NEWSLETTER!

DUTCH JAZZ GUITARIST MATT OTTEN, PHENOMENAL SUCCESS ON YOUTUBE, AND HIS THREE PEERLESS GUITARS!

Dutch jazz guitarist Matt Otten first came to the notice of Peerless around seven years ago and at that time we decided to acknowledge his superb playing and compositional skills by presenting him with a Monarch archtop and thin-line Renaissance Custom model. At a later date, we sent Matt a Cremona all-solid, carved archtop and have been grateful for his exposure and the valuable feedback on the models that he has provided.

In addition to his tuition-based web site at: <http://www.mattotten.com/peerless-guitars> where details of instructional DVDs and CDs and the excellent 'Matt Otten Plays Peerless Guitars' CD may be found, Matt has of course his very own You Tube channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/mattotten> where he has to date attracted over 9.5 million hits and 15,000 subscribers.



Matt with his Peerless Renaissance.
Picture Courtesy of Jean-Jaques Abadie

We spoke recently to Matt who was just about to leave to play three concerts in France with his wife, jazz singer Maria Harp, and posed the following questions.....

Q. Who are your major influences/favourite players including contemporary guitarists?

M.O: I started listening to Wes Montgomery and Kenny Burrell, Jim Hall, later also Scofield. There are lots of players nowadays that I love, like Peter Bernstein, or Lage Lund from Norway. I should say that I have also always listened a lot to pianists, like Bill Evans, Herbie Hancock, and horn players. I have always been drawn to imaginative and melodic improvisers, regardless of their instrument. In listening, I was not particularly focussed on guitar for a long time, but my appreciation for the guitar as an instrument has grown again in recent years. I noticed, in discussions with students, and followers, that I in fact do not use a lot of typical guitar 'tricks' and my style of improvisation is quite melody orientated, and not so centred on the guitar itself. But, I have been rediscovering the guitar in terms of its unique sonic properties and possibilities, and I am still learning a lot in that regard.

Q. Could you comment please on your approach to recording the guitar, especially a carved all-solid model like the Cremona?

M.O: I like to record as pure as possible, often without amp, plug in into the mixing desk directly. Then I complete the sound with some compression and reverb, and mild EQ, depending on the song. Sometimes I will use a clip-on condenser mike on the Cremona, to add some extra acoustic transparency to the total sound. You can hear that type of warm mixed semi-acoustic sound on my single April Song (iTunes, Spotify etc), recorded with the Cremona.

Q. Why do you think the Netherlands has produced so many excellent jazz guitarists including Jesse van Ruller, Martijn van Ileren and of course yourself for instance?

M.O: I don't know really, but several of those great players are from the Hilversum conservatory, and were taught by the late Wim Overgaauw, the nestor of Dutch jazz guitar. I am not from that school, but I did listen to Wim Overgaauw as a teenager, so perhaps some of it rubbed off. Jazz education in The Netherlands by the way is highly appreciated internationally. Many foreign students come to Holland in fact. I had classical training myself, and I am mostly self-taught in jazz, but with the high standards of playing over here, I had plenty of motivation and drive to always get better.

Q. Do you have plans to play further concerts outside Holland?

M.O: No definite plans, but my recent trip to France was great and I would like to do that more often. Since my YouTube activities have really paid off, I am reaching many listeners all over the world, and I am selling more music, and lessons in the US than anywhere else. I could not have imagined that 20 years ago. Still, going to meet those listeners is something I would like to do, and perhaps also giving some guitar classes abroad. It has already been suggested a couple of times, so we will see.

Q. You have recorded CDs with your wife, jazz singer Maria Harp. Do you write all the songs or is it a collaborative exercise?



Matt with his Peerless Cremona

M.O: It is usually collaborative, I write music to Maria's lyrics, although I have written lyrics a few times as well. The collaboration has certainly influenced my writing, and playing, especially in broadening my horizon from pure jazz, to any kind of music that feels good. I used to be a bit of a jazz purist, but not so much anymore! Nevertheless the jazz feeling is always present somehow, it remains my main inspiration.

Peerless : Thank you Matt for your continuing support for Peerless and we wish you every success in the future. We feel certain that your contribution to jazz guitar has been significant to say the least and we look forward to watching your career continue to evolve.

MO: Thank you for the opportunity to get to know Peerless guitars, and to enjoy playing them!

More information at: <http://www.mattotten.com>

Text Courtesy of David Nordon-Angus