



File Under: ACOUSTIC INSTRUMENTAL

Phone Interviews: YES

Electronic Art Files: YES

Street Date: January 7, 2003

Peter Fields

STILLNESS OF THE HEART

WAMMIE-nominated winner of the Mid-Atlantic Songwriter's Contest releases 4th solo CD of finely articulated acoustic guitar melodies with sensational ensemble backing; hailed by Leo Kottke, Pierre Bensusan and Ben Verdery for his meticulous craftsmanship, Peter Fields was a finalist in the National Finger-Picking Championships.

STILLNESS OF THE HEART

On STILLNESS OF THE HEART, Peter Fields uses classical technique combined with many innovative techniques to propel the classical guitar into a new realm of excitement. The selections demonstrate how he can improvise fluidly, and has developed a series of techniques that coax a huge tonal variety out of the instrument. "I use percussive sounds," he notes, "to imply accompaniment by a drummer, 'slap' bass sounds to imply a contemporary electric bass player, and the full gamut of natural and artificial harmonics to expand the range of the instrument."

"I have played most types of guitar throughout my career – nylon-string, steel-string acoustic, solid-body electric and arch-top. For a while, I owned an 8-string classical guitar. Mostly now I play the classical nylon-strung instrument and two variations: the requinto, a smaller classical tuned a fifth higher, and the baritone, a classical guitar tuned a fourth lower." These instruments help characterize STILLNESS OF THE HEART.

This CD available to your readers at music stores, amazon.com and from the label (www.peterfields.net).

Peter Fields

Peter Fields studied guitar with Bill Biesecker and Fred Wilchek, both students of Aaron Shearer when they attended the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore; but the teacher most responsible for his evolution as a guitarist is David Perry, himself a student of Jesus de Silva and Andres Segovia.

After being named Outstanding Music Student at the Tidewater Music Festival, Fields further developed his signature sound throughout the 1980's and was chosen as a finalist at the Milwaukee Finger-Picking Competition as well as the National Finger-Picking Championships held in Kansas. Fields played bass on LAST CIGARETTE AND A BLINDFOLD by Gene Ryder and the Lifters (Mercury Records, 1988), a critically-acclaimed recording produced by the legendary Tom Dowd and featuring guitarist John (Mary Chapin Carpenter) Jennings.

In the 1990's, Fields' SOLO GUITAR MUSIC was named Instrumental Acoustic Album of the Year by Northern Virginia Rhythm, and was nominated for a "WAMMIE" (Washington Area Music Association Award). His REFLECTIONS ON A RIVER (OhmnaMuZe, 1998) was also released. Last year, Fields established PF Music and released CHRISTMAS MEMORIES, a collection of traditional carols and holiday songs arranged for a trio of classical guitars: requinto, concert and baritone. STILLNESS OF THE HEART is Fields' fourth solo recording, and second on PF Music.

Inbetween making his own albums and touring, Fields played on scoring sessions for The Discovery Channel, The Learning Channel, National Geographic and Fox Television. He was commissioned by The Mary Washington College Department of Dance to create "Ritmos Contoneados," a suite of pieces for classical guitar and guitar duo, trio and quarter with percussion, based on Brazilian and Argentine rhythms. Fields has also created "Kinetics," a piece for guitar and violin commissioned by the Rappahannock Dance Company performed by Robert Spates, violin, and Fields on guitar; it is a five movement piece, each having a different quality to match pre-existing choreography. He has performed at the Kennedy Center, as a featured artist at the Corcoran Gallery Jazz Series in Washington DC, and at international festivals in France and Portugal.

More information - including lengthy interview excerpts suitable for publication - is included in this pack.

I'll be contacting you soon about this recording; let me know if you are interested in featuring Peter Fields in a "how-to" technical guitar or songwriting section of your publication.

Robert Newman, Media Manager, MUSIK INTERNATIONAL

Toll-Free 888-476-8745 • 303-448-0958 • media@musikinternational.com

MUSIK INTERNATIONAL • 154 Betasso Road • Boulder • CO 80302 USA

Peter Fields on...

GUITAR PERFORMANCE TECHNIQUE

“One of the reasons I have stuck with nylon-string guitar through the years is that when properly played, it is capable of a much bigger tonal variety than other guitars (excepting the use of external signal processing). As do all classical guitarists, I spend a great deal of time working with my fingernails to keep them at the optimum length, shape, and consistency. Changing both the position on the string and the angle of attack has a huge impact on the nature of the sound one gets from the guitar. I spend a lot of time exploring those subtleties.

Compared to many guitarists, my professional career has revolved around performing solo or in duos with various instruments. This has led me to develop a very complex and full style of playing. When playing traditional Jazz, for instance, I can play both a walking bass line and chordal accompaniment as well as the melody. Sometimes I add a percussive slap of the strings with my right hand to suggest a high-hat part. When playing Latin music, I play bass and rhythm and melody, and use even more complex percussive sounds to imply a full ensemble. Sometimes in samba, I wrap the 4th string around the 5th to create a sound much like a snare drum, then simultaneously play a part in artificial harmonics on the first and second strings to suggest agogo bells.”

- PETER FIELDS
FAVORITE BANDS
1. The Beatles
 2. The Band
 3. Steely Dan
 4. Little Feat
 5. Crowded House

MAINTAINING THE PHYSICAL

“Like a lot of professional musicians, by the time I hit my mid-thirties I began to experience some repetitive stress type problems. This led me into a huge journey into fitness. I began working out regularly – lifting weights, doing cardio-vascular exercise, and eventually practicing yoga - maintaining my commitment to all three disciplines on a regular basis. In fact, I am now a certified personal trainer who helps other people enjoy the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.”

ON BEING A MUSICIAN

“The thing I like best about being a professional musicians is the experience in live performance when I become lost in the moment of creativity and shared experience with the audience. When everything is going at its best, I am no longer aware of playing an instrument; I am allowing the music to happen and acting as a vehicle to allow the others in the room with me to experience the same thing.”

GUITAR INFLUENCES

If I had to list the guitarists who have been the biggest influence on me, it would probably go like this:

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Ralph Towner | 7. Carlos Barbosa-Lima |
| 2. Baden Powell | 8. Pepe Romero |
| 3. Andres Segovia | 9. Leo Kottke |
| 4. Charlie Byrd | 10. Guy Van Duser |
| 5. Gene Bertoncini | 11. Jim Hall |
| 6. John Williams | 12. John Scofield |
| | 13. Frederick Hand |

Peter Fields on...

COMPOSING

“The process of writing music for me is a combination of spontaneity and craftsmanship. The initial idea for a song will usually come to me instantly, while I’m practicing or sometimes even while I’m performing. It is quite often very connected to a specific place; I guess one could say that I compose musical landscapes, although I’m not trying to be deliberately programmatic. My music is an expression of how I feel in a place, rather than an expression of how someone else may perceive that place externally.

Once the initial idea happens, the real work begins. This is where my classical training as a guitarist and as a composer really is important. With very rare exceptions, the initial idea requires a lot of molding and shaping to achieve its final form as a complete work of art. Most of my compositions are based in melody, therefore the exact harmonic structure and accompaniment part are not necessarily etched in stone. There are some compositions where every note is worked out in detail, but in most of my pieces there is always room for variation depending on the moment. It may take months to work out all of the nuances.

My process of composing and practicing is pretty inclusive. I sit down to do music in a regular, disciplined manner with a set of possibilities as to my desired outcome. Therefore, depending on how the flow of the day is going, I will practice technique, repertoire, and compose or revise to varying degrees.

The classical guitar is a very intimate and direct instrument. My compositions must have both emotional impact and conceptual cohesiveness. To me, the balance between pure emotion and disciplined craft is the exciting part of music. Either one alone is incomplete, but when they are in perfect equilibrium, they can produce an elevation of awareness in the listener.

I am trying to create truly trans-personal music. By focusing personal ideas into well-crafted forms, I hope to allow my music to achieve a certain universality, an archetypal connection. While every listener will have different reactions to some degree, unlike many artists who are content to lay their work out and have people interpret it however they please, I hope to create a more emotionally and spiritually universal experience. Rather than say: ‘this is my work; you can deal with it however you want,’ I prefer to say: ‘give me your focused attention, and I will use all of my abilities to take us on a journey of awareness.’ I’m not trying to get the listener to think a certain way, but to share with me and all those present the experience of the moment.”

PETER FIELDS FAVORITE SINGER-SONGWRITERS

1. Joni Mitchell
2. Paul Simon
3. Tom Waits
4. Stevie Wonder

PERFORMING

“My goal with performance is to ride that line between control and chaos. For a classical guitarist, that may seem to be hyperbole, but it is very true. Even though I have practiced and refined my repertoire, I leave plenty of room open for inspiration and improvisation. As a player, when you are teetering on the edge of control, some incredibly magical moments happen. I love to surprise myself during a performance, have something flow out of me that was unexpected. Unlike some classically trained musicians, I give myself permission to go out on a limb during performance, fully realizing that occasionally that limb snaps!

What I am always striving for is a union between performer and audience; it’s like an agreement, really. I’m asking the audience to give me their undivided attention towards my musical ideas, and I agree to craft those ideas into a shape that is accessible to most listeners.

As a professional musician, I have become accustomed to performing in such a wide variety of circumstances, under such a wide variety of conditions, that I’m pretty bulletproof when it comes to a pre-performance routine. I’ve forced myself to play the most incredibly difficult pieces under the worst circumstances so that I could learn to not be distracted by external situations when it comes time to perform. Since the real world tends to conspire against everything being perfect, it just seems more realistic and practical to me to be able to summon the muse regardless of whatever else is going on. My study of yoga and meditation is a real asset in that regard, as I can use specific techniques learned from those disciplines to change from tension to calm in a very brief period of time.”

Peter Fields on PERFORMING, continued...

That being said, I do have my preferences. I don't like to drive right before a performance – driving creates more tension in my wrists than almost anything. I don't usually like to eat a big meal right before – definitely don't usually drink coffee just before, as the natural performance adrenaline is usually enough to keep me very alert! I don't like long waits backstage to go on. The optimum routine for me is to arrive at a venue, load-in, sound check, and rehearse some of the evening's program in the performance space to get a sense for how it sounds and feels to play in that venue. Then I like to go back to the hotel or someone's home and just relax, maybe take a short nap, then get dressed, etc. and arrive back at the venue maybe 10-15 minutes before curtain – just enough time to warm-up, but not too much time to sit around and be bored or nervous or both.

What I am really pickier about is what happens afterwards. I'm always very disappointed if the show doesn't flow into a nice meal and socializing with all the folks involved in the presentation of the performance. The opportunity to meet and get to know people is one of the things about having a very public job that I like.

Peter Fields on...

MUSICAL INFLUENCES

Classical Guitar

Of course, I perform and adore virtually all the great pieces and composers. I have always been especially fond of some of the great South American composers for the guitar, especially Villa-Lobos and Barrios.

Classical (other than Classical Guitar)

I love repertoire from every period of Western classical music, especially chamber music. Favorites include the late Beethoven String Quartets, the Bartok String Quartets, the Messiaen "Quartet for the End of Time," the Barber "Adagio for Strings," Bach Organ pieces and the Contrapuncti from the Art of the Fugue.

Jazz

For many years of my life, Jazz was the primary music I used for instruction, inspiration and as a benchmark of what was great. For having the most direct influence on my playing, I would have to credit Ralph Towner and Baden Powell. But also note Louis Armstrong, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Charlie Parker, Phil Woods, Wayne Shorter, Joe Zawinul, Chick Corea, Dave Brubek, the group Oregon, Martin Taylor, just to name a few.

Latin and World

Astor Piazzolla and tango have had a huge influence on my conception of music. The sheer intensity is un-matched; it is music that comes from this deep, lonely place inside the psyche by way of the heart. The music of Brazil has been very significant to my musical evolution. Samba and bossa nova are both forms which hold endless fascination for me. The way Brazilians play nylon-string guitar is so energetic and powerful; it's like acoustic rock'n'roll. Currently, I'm learning to play the guitarra, an ancient Portuguese instrument. Because I work with Alvaro Raposo, a Portuguese singer-songwriter from the Azores (a group of islands in the Atlantic that belong to Portugal), the music of Portugal - especially fado - has been inspirational. I also studied flamenco with Fernando Sirvent, learning the traditional forms for accompanying dancers. I am in awe of players like Sabicas and Paco Pena. Flamenco is a magnificent world unto itself, but I felt that to become proficient in the tradition would require too much of a divergence from some of the other paths down which I was already traveling. I listen to and enjoy music from every part of the globe.

Acoustic

Having lived most of my life in the Washington D.C. area, bluegrass is an omnipresent influence. Many people are not really aware that the D.C./central Virginia region is where most of the major bluegrass artists live. Both John Starling and Ben Eldridge from the Seldom Scene live in Fredericksburg. Despite all of that, I have never played bluegrass. Leo Kottke was a big influence on me early in my life. I have always been drawn to players who use finger-style techniques to create high-energy music. Guy Van Duser's Stride Guitar album had a profound effect on me – it combined some great finger-style stuff with the more complex harmonies of Jazz. I also enjoy Pierre Bensusan very much, and mourn the loss of Michael Hedges.

Biographical musings by...

Peter Fields

“My musical life started in Dallas when I was two years old and asked my parents for a record player for Christmas. I can’t remember not wanting to play music. My family was not musical, although I know my dad always wanted to play an instrument and music was always being played in the house. Some of the earliest songs I can recall were "Sweet Lorraine" by Louis Armstrong, "Take Five" by Dave Brubeck, "Puff the Magic Dragon" by Peter, Paul and Mary, the Joan Baez LIVE IN CONCERT album, and the Kingston Trio version of "Where Have All the Flowers Gone." My dad loved Jazz, particularly Dixieland, and these styles, too, were played at home.

The first record I ever bought was a single of ‘She’s A Woman’ b/w ‘I Feel Fine’ by the Beatles. When I look back on it now, I think the Beatles’ un-paralleled melodic structures are what got my attention at that early age. I was seven, I think, when I bought it, so I wasn’t really yet caught up in adolescent pop-culture, though I knew that the Beatles were a huge deal.

I started playing trumpet in school band when I was nine. My heroes were Louis Armstrong and Herb Alpert. I remember the day in 4th grade when the band teacher came in and asked who wanted to be in band. I had transferred into that school in mid-year from a school that did not have a music program for students in that grade, so this took me completely by surprise. It was like a gift, so my hand shot straight up, as I had dreamed of playing a musical instrument from as far back as I can remember. I rented my first trumpet and took it home and just stared at it in awe; I had never seen anything so wonderful and beautiful. Unlike today, in the 60’s kids didn’t own a huge array of expensive, hi-tech toys, so this trumpet was by far and away the biggest thing that I had ever owned. I used to practice on it for hours, until my lips were numb.

I got my first guitar when I was 12. Unlike a lot of my contemporaries, I was motivated to play guitar primarily by the folk music scene, not rock and roll; that came later as a result of living in Elizabethton, Tennessee, up in the mountains. In 1968, the pop counter-culture that spread out from California was not exactly a big influence in East Tennessee. My mother was working for the Office of Economic Opportunity, one of LBJ’s Great Society programs, and that put us in contact with a beautifully rich world of folks from the mountains of Appalachia. I was absorbing and experiencing a lot of indigenous mountain music and living in a social world that included a lot of craftspeople. The musicians I was around were acoustic folk/old time players, mostly performing on guitar and banjo.

But my first guitar was a classical guitar. Despite being around all of those folk musicians, I decided to play nylon-string guitar and to this day have never owned a six-string, steel string guitar. I started reading music when I was nine, so I learned a lot of guitar from printed music, rather than by imitation. I spent hours playing pieces from the Carcassi classical guitar method. Some of my earliest guitar heroes were Glenn Campbell and Paul Simon.

By age 13, I had started to listen to rock and roll seriously. Jimi Hendrix was a complete revelation. I liked Jefferson Airplane, Jethro Tull, Emerson, Lake and Palmer, and Yes tremendously. I also listened to a lot of folk Rock by James Taylor, Cat Stevens, CSNY, etc. When you are a 13 or 14 year old guy, you are still uncertain if you will be able to sing or not as your “voice” is still changing. I was learning songs and trying to sing at this period, because all of the people who were famous were singers; I think everyone wants to be a rock star at some point. But it became pretty obvious before my 15th birthday that singing just wasn’t going to happen for me.

In addition to focusing solely on instrumental guitar studies outside of school, I switched from trumpet to French Horn in the school band. While elsewhere in this press kit, I have listed some of my pop music influences, it is important to note that I was also listening to classical, Jazz and acoustic music just as much. At this point I was very into Stravinsky, Moussorgsky, and Debussy as well as working through pieces by some of the great guitar composers like Tarrega, Sor and Giuliani. This is when I first heard Charlie Byrd, the great jazz guitarist who performed on the classical guitar versus the standard arch-top jazz instrument. In many ways, Charlie set the template for the rest of my evolution as a guitarist to this day; his work encouraged me to keep combining the best of classical, jazz, and popular music into a wonderful, eclectic gumbo.

At age 16, I first heard Leo Kottke and ended up buying a 12-string guitar. That 12-string became an important part of my musical style for many years. Because I was an only child, I had become very used to spending time by myself, so I developed a solo style that was self-contained. The 12-string was a natural continuation of that approach, as it can create a very full sound when played finger-style.

At 17, I began to listen to Mahavishnu Orchestra, Return to Forever, and Weather Report. This really took me to new realms creatively.

(continued)

Biographical musings by Peter Fields, continued...

By the time I was 15 or 16, I had already developed a world view that gave equal respect to all peoples, nations and religions. It was a very natural extension, then, to give all music equal stature, both within the Western European Tradition and across the planet. It's no surprise, therefore, that when I went to college, I ended up studying a broad range of disciplines. I feel this has been a very important factor in making my music what it is today. I studied a great deal of non-Western philosophy and literature, and began listening to a wide variety of world music. Aesthetic philosophy has always fascinated me, and so I always have a conceptual framework that serves as the intellectual underpinning of my work.

When did I turn pro? Well, I started making money at playing music when I was 15. The transition to becoming a full-time professional was sort of a long process that really crystallized by the time I was 22 or so. By the time I graduated from college, I realized that composing and performing music was what I really wanted to do in life. There are other things I have done to make a living, and other fields of endeavor about which I am passionate, but they all are in second place relative to the transcendental magic that is music."

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Member, Board of Directors, Fredericksburg Festival of the Arts

Member, Stafford County Board of Supervisors

Peter Fields is an elected legislator from Virginia's George Washington District of Stafford County, a county of approx 105,000 people located 35 miles south of Washington, D.C. The Board of Supervisors adopts the budget for all county services, including education, and regulates land use.

Fields' decision to run for office grew from a commitment to creating sustainable communities. "I have felt for many years that our current paradigm of how we relate to each other and to the planet as a whole was flawed," he explains, "that consideration of the whole needed to become more important in our policy-making. So rather than complain, I decided to try and work on solutions to these problems. Since taking office, I have expended a lot of effort and time in trying to create accountability for the environmental and social impacts of sprawl. Virginia is not an easy State in which to do this, as local government's authority is more restricted than in most states. The tradition of rule by an elite runs long and deep in the Old Dominion, but I am determined to force our process of government in Stafford County to be responsible to the public interest, not facilitate the agendas of special interests."

CHRONOLOGY AND LOCATIONS

Peter Fields was born June 13, 1956 in Dallas, Texas, and his family moved frequently throughout the 1960's (1960 to Chicago, IL; 1962 to Gibson City, IL; 1962 to Norris, TN; 1965 to Elizabethton, TN; 1969 to Kingsport, TN). In 1970, the family moved to Maryland and Fields attended LaPlata High School. There, at age 15, he played his first paying gig and began working in a musical instrument store.

In 1975, the Fields moved to Lexington Park, Maryland, and Peter attended St. Mary's College of Maryland, studying guitar and music composition, and playing French Horn in the college wind ensemble. After graduation in 1979, Peter Fields spent a season in Bar Harbor, Maine, before relocated to Annapolis, Maryland by year's end. He managed a record store that also sold high-end audio gear and, on his own time, began experimenting with the recording process. Fields developed his repertoire and began performing as both a solo guitarist and in various jazz groups.

In 1981, Fields moved back to LaPlata, Maryland, to help care for his father, who had cancer. He worked in a music store and played gigs as a solo, with jazz groups, and with a Top 40 band. In 1984, Fields began his full-time professional music career with a move to Fredericksburg, Virginia. In 1986, he moved to Stafford County, Virginia, which he says is "across the river from Fredericksburg. And in 1999, I was elected to the Board of Supervisors, the governing body of the County."

Peter Fields has performed at the prestigious Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., as a featured artist at the Corcoran Gallery Jazz Series (also in Washington DC), in competitions and a wide variety of performance settings in the United States, as well as at international festivals in France and Portugal.

For a current itinerary, please visit www.peterfields.net.