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### The Maker's Mark by Tony McManus



**The Maker's Mark**  
By  
**Tony McManus**

**The Maker's Mark** is a unique project undertaken by versatile guitarist Tony McManus and Paul Heumiller of Dream Guitars in Asheville, North Carolina. Over the course of the album Tony performs a wide range of guitar music on fifteen distinctive instruments, each handpicked by Tony and Paul. To comment on the instruments used is well outside my scope here but as a review of the sounds created I was amazed at the huge variety of guitar voices encompassed on the album.

From arrangements of strathspeys, jigs, reels and piping tunes, to Irish songs, Spanish popular tunes, Romanian folk songs, songs of protest and even a Monteverdi madrigal, each tune has been matched with a particular 'voice'. The album notes provide a wealth of info on the specific instruments and a history of their builders. Alternative tunings are a major feature of the tracks on this album and these are provided together with close up photos demonstrating the beautiful hand craft that goes into the building of these incredible instruments.

Opening with a Scottish set Tony creates hints of pipes and drones then later in "Chalaneru" the guitar imitates the voice in an Asturian song. In "The Lochaber Dance" and "The Laird of Drumblair" you can almost hear a fiddle playing such is Tony's ability to match tone and style. The distinctive sound of the baritone guitar on the track "N'Kosi Sikelele Afrika" allows opportunity to demonstrate a version of the melody played entirely on harmonics whilst "The Rolling Waves" showcases Tony's extraordinary dexterity in the playing of the jig. The sitar guitar featured in the Romanian tunes contributes perfectly to create the right atmosphere for the melancholic music.

The mini 12 string played on the track "Valse des Belugas" has a beautiful, sweet delicacy reminiscent of a mandolin and brings this astonishing album to a close.

Wishing to celebrate the current state of guitar building **The Maker's Mark** is a testament to the ever far-reaching search for improvement of what is now the worlds' most popular instrument. The music is beautiful, masterfully performed by Tony McManus,

providing a wonderful soundtrack to a commentary on the world of guitar building. I would imagine that the labour of love that has been this album would have been incredibly rewarding to Tony and Paul and I'm sure that the phrase in brackets under the CD title **The Maker's Mark** is no throwaway comment -- "*the dream Guitar sessions*"!

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