

Todd Hallawell, Guitar

Soundset

This CD and Simple Gifts are dedicated to Grandma Lillian, who by giving me my first guitar changed the course of my life and gave me years of happiness.

Lillian Hillis (1903-1998)

A note on the naming of this CD...

Most children start out listening to the music that their parents played on the stereo. But at some critical point, they invariably seek out music that sets them apart from their parents in style, and usually by at least 90 decibels! Unlike most kids, I continued listening to the old stuff long after I had a choice. In my mind, the pop music of the day was great fun, but somehow didn't compare to the innovations of Brubeck, the syncopations of Tito Puente, or the virtuosity of Andres Segovia. These artists and so many more laid the foundation of my musical taste, causing me to be forever and hopelessly behind the times. I wouldn't have it any other way.

here was a time when most of the contestants at the National Fingerstyle Guitar competition in Winfield, Kansas, were amateurs in the truest sense of the word—people who played guitar simply for the love of it, and lived day to day lives outside of the music world. In recent years, as word has gotten around and acoustic guitar has experienced a revitalization, that has been changing, with the winners now more likely to be working professional performers. Even so, still rare are players who come away with top honors on their first try. Todd Hallawell walked up to the stage in 1997 and won "the big one" his first time out. He did it by playing with the verve and consistency that are his trademarks, and his enthusiasm showed a trait that goes back to Winfield's origins—playing for the love of it.

Todd's Winfield-winning entries (*Tico Tico* and *Leola Kay* for the preliminaries, *Brazil* and *Jiffy Jam* in the finals) appear in this collection, and show some of the varietal flavors of the current fingerstyle world, stretching from a modern Jerry Reed tune to a 1930's Latin American pop hit. In his performance of these tunes he demonstrates an innate sense of musicality and variety. It is those qualities—not the mere flash of executing difficult licks and passages—that keep listeners' attention and bring satisfaction after the notes stop flying. Another of Todd's strengths is years of live performance experience, sometimes as a solo artist, and sometimes with saxophonist Jeff Ervin, who collaborates on four of the selections here.

Todd begins with his own *Leola Kay*, a joyous piece he wrote for his wife that flows with the stylistic touch of Leo Kottke at his best. Next is Jerry Reed's swinging *Jiffy Jam*, where Todd uses the sonic qualities of the half-an-octave-lower baritone guitar to great effect. *The Last Steam Engine Train* is an old tune that was unearthed as fingerpicking guitar fare by John Fahey and Leo Kottke in the late 60's, and has been an acoustic jam session staple ever since. Here Todd and long-time compatriot Greg Sarena pour on momentum with a fine duet that meshes the sound of Todd's baritone guitar against Greg's hammering rhythm like gears on a driving wheel. The poignant *Cydney* is another of Todd's original pieces, and deviates from the typical "song form" with ever increasing intensity, showing his formidable compositional skills. *Flat Foot Floogee* is a big band tune from the 40's that comes off as just plain fun for Todd's one man band, with a multi-horn section put together by Jeff Ervin, and some neat solos by flatpicker John Moore.

I was pleased and honored when Todd wanted to do a rendition of one of my previously unrecorded tunes, one that I had carried around on the guitar for years, called Miss You Like Crazy. The melancholy feeling that brought this jazz waltz into being comes to life with Todd's fine arrangement featuring intertwining countermelodies between guitar and tenor sax. Brazil and Tico Tico are two great Latin tunes, with a difficulty rating that warns off all but the most intrepid guitar adventurists. Todd is undaunted, and makes them roll from the strings like butter.

Ballad I and Ballad II are, for me, the highlight of this collection. They are previously unrecorded works by Russian guitarist and composer Nikita Koshkin, and enjoy a fine debut here through Todd's thoughtful interpretation. They are followed by a lighthearted ensemble rendition of another Koshkin piece, Bluesman's Tears, where Jeff conjures up a breezy flute-and-reed section, and plays a fine solo. Reedology is arguably the quintessential Jerry Reed tune. Written in the 1970's and presented on a mainly vocal-based album by this twentieth-century master of guitar composition, it remained largely unknown to guitarists until it was transcribed—decoded is probably a better term—a decade later by John Knowles.

When I first heard *Music for a Found Harmonium* it seemed familiar. I was sure I had heard it before, and suspected that it was adapted from Mozart or something of that era. I was surprised to learn that it was a modern piece, written in the early 1980's by British art-rock avatar Simon Jeffes who first recorded it with his eclectic group Penguin Café Orchestra. I was even more surprised to learn from Todd that this tune is one of the current favorites for round-the-campfire jamming at the Winfield festival, which is where he picked it up. Hey, what ever happened to those easy tunes like *Cripple Creek* and *Salty Dog?* Joining Todd here for a round of solo-swapping are Gordon Acri on banjo, John Moore on guitar, and David Peters on mandolin.

Todd even let me play along on a tune, and the set ends with our duet of the Shaker hymn Simple Gifts. He was uncompromising as an arranger and producer, exploring myriad possibilities while we worked out parts over a couple of days, but to his credit, the final result still has that most important quality—simplicity.

At the end of listening to the set here you realize—especially if you've ever considered entering a competition yourself—why Todd triumphed at Winfield. It's not about hot licks or fancy flourishes, but more about getting difficult things to flow with ease, and making music that any listener can appreciate. The most respected winners of musical competitions always seem to do it that way.

-Pat Kirtley, February 1999

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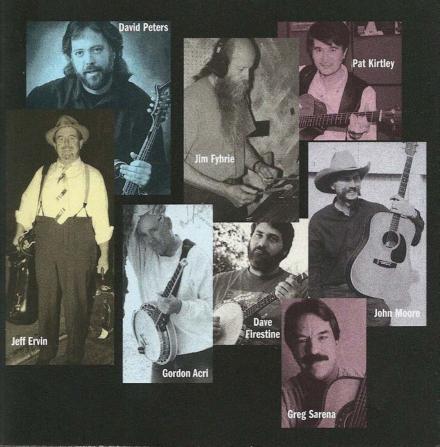


∼ Thanks ∼

First and foremost I'd like to thank all the people who have come to see my performances over the years and especially those who have kept in touch. Without your support and encouragement I doubt if this moment would have ever come. A very special thanks to all the musicians who donated their time and talant, Gordon Acri, Jeff Ervin, Dave Firestine, Jim Fyhrie, Pat Kirtley, John Moore, David Peters, and Greg Sarena. To the composers Nikita Koshkin and Pat Kirtley for allowing me to be the first to record their pieces. And to Lance McCollum for his extraordinary guitars and constant support. And to the good folks at L.R. Baggs for their interest and help. Thanks to Gore for coming up with the brilliant idea behind Elixir strings. (They've made me sound a little better than I actually am!)

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A special thanks goes out to Jerry Reed whose compositions changed my impression of what guitars are capable of doing. Thanks to the Walnut Valley Festival, in Winfield, Kansas for putting on the best music festival in the world. (Unbiased opinion) And a very loud screaming group THANK YOU to the "Carp Camp" at Winfield who were the inspiration and motivation behind this recording of Music for a Found Harmonium. You guys are great! It's impossible to thank everyone, so if I've missed anyone please let me know and I'll mention you twice on the next CD! If you are still looking for your name, keep reading, there's always hope. Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their country. Owerly is as querty does, opinionem populi Romani fuisse, variem afters responsurum non asse neque ad indiction additurum. Quise famia non idorico solum emanatat quod iste certe statuerat ac deliberaviera, non adesse, verum etian quod mento queriquem avaluncem, tem amentem, for impudentemi guitarse interestinguis by Taylor, arbitratatur qui tain in referiis crimination, multis testibus, quid age in hac cofee beenis Tim Cience destinder assert. Eti dem Verra qui bit sacqui, a versa qui a fui sacqui, a versa qui a fui sacqui, a consideration projectus, se praints and quide admitted projectus, se praints and quide admitted projectus, se praints and quide admitted of projectus. As a manage of the coffee beenis Tim Cience destinder assert. Eti dem Verra qui bit sacqui alla manage con a consideration projectus, se praints and admitted projectus. As a manage of the coffee and the consideration of the consideration and the consideration of the consideration and consideration. The consideration is the consideration of the consideration and consider



- 1) Leola Kay Todd Hallawell Acoustic Guitar Solo
- 2) Jiffy Jam Jerry Reed Hubbard Baritone Guitar, performed with Jeff Ervin on saxophone
- 3) The Last Steam Engine Train
 John Fahey
 Acoustic and Baritone Guitars, performed with Greg Sarena
- 4) Cydney Todd Hallawell Acoustic Guitar Solo
- 5) Flat Foot Floogee Slim Gaillard, Bud Green, Slam Stewart Acoustic Guitar, Jeff Ervin on Saxes, John Moore on Flat-pick Guitar
- 6) Miss You Like Crazy Pat Kirtley Acoustic Guitar, with Jeff Ervin on Sax
- 7) Brazil Barroso Ary Evangelista Acoustic Guitar Solo
- 8) Tico tico Jose Gomes de Abreu Acoustic Guitar Solo

- 9) Ballad I Nikita Koshkin Acoustic Guitar Solo
- 10) Ballad II Nikita Koshkin Acoustic Guitar Solo
- 11) Bluesman's Tears Nikita Koshkin Acoustic Guitar with Jeff Ervin, saxes/flute
- 12) Reedology Jerry Reed Hubbard Acoustic Guitar Solo
- 13) Music for a Found Harmonium
 Simon Jeffes
 Todd Hallawell Acoustic Guitars,
 Rhythm Guitar, Bass
 Gordon Acri 5-string Banjo
 Dave Firestine Tenor Banjo
 Jim Fyhrie Hammered Dulcimer
 John Moore Flat-pick Guitar
 David Peters Mandolin
- 14) Simple Gifts Traditional Hymn Baritone and Acoustic Guitars performed with Pat Kirtley