



Preston Reed

“... widely thought of as the world’s most gifted guitarist” Total Guitar

“Spectacular... the best one-man show this reviewer has seen since Bruce Springsteen... A terrific performer” The Irish Independent

You may experience a strange sensation when you watch Preston Reed live for the first time. It starts with a sharp intake of breath. Seconds later, your jaw swings on its hinges, your eyes become dinner plates and your brain fizzles as it computes the musical madness being relayed by your ears. You feel light-headed, because you haven't breathed for two minutes. Don't be alarmed. These are all perfectly normal reactions to witnessing the guitar visionary of the 21st century.

Preston Reed is a one-man revolution. The 53-year-old New Yorker tweaks the nose of musical convention, pokes the eye of accepted wisdom, and burns the rulebook of the past. His unique style is impossible, unfathomable, unthinkable, as with blurred hands he taps, tickles, slaps and soothes his instrument, fusing polyrhythmic percussion with emotive melody to create a sonic landscape. Each piece is a symphonic tidal wave, yet Reed only needs one acoustic and ten fingers to send it crashing onto audiences across the planet.

There's a clear line in the sand when it comes to the journey of Preston Reed. It was drawn in the summer of 1988, as the guitarist sat in his Minneapolis apartment and searched for a way to break out of a musical rut. Until that point, Reed's path had been familiar. He was a child of the '60s, and cites his earliest memory as The Rolling Stones' hit The Last Time, whose classic lick led him to early flirtations with the ukulele and a grounding in basic chords courtesy of his father. He wrote his first song at eight – a number called The Lonely Night – before a course of regimented classical lessons wilted his passion.

But fate wasn't finished with Preston Reed. At 15, the bug bit again, as Reed attended a Hot Tuna show in New York and was floored by the bluesy fretwork of Jorma Kaukonen. That night, his guitar

was retrieved from the closet and took up permanent residence on his lap, with Reed drawing inspiration from acoustic legends like John Fahey and Leo Kottke, and developing his own voice along the way. He was still just 17 when whispers of his talent buzzed through the music circuit following a live debut in support of beat poet Allen Ginsberg at the Smithsonian Institute.

Starting with 1979's Acoustic Guitar, a volley of thrilling albums spread Reed's reputation, and by 1988 he had signed a major deal with MCA with the help of his friend, country singer Lyle Lovett. But behind closed doors, the guitarist was frustrated. Though spellbinding by any standards, his playing had reached a plateau; his muse held in a stranglehold by the physical limitations of the instrument. Then the thunderbolt struck. Reed wiped his technique clean, stepped into the void and made his first attempt at the two-handed fretboard attack that would change his trajectory forever. Creatively and commercially, things would never be the same again.

If Reed were the type of musician to look back, he could reflect on three decades of glories including gigs with Bonnie Raitt and Linda Ronstadt, burgeoning sales of his 15 (and counting) studio albums, sold-out venues across three continents, untold hits on YouTube and the praise of both the man on the street and fellow six-string pioneers like Al DiMeola and Michael Hedges. If he were a statistician, he might refer to the 1997 live satellite broadcast on Turkish television that saw an audience of 120 million in 17 countries flood the switchboards after his performance.

But Preston Reed doesn't deal in nostalgia. Twenty years after he changed the face of the acoustic guitar, this trailblazer still tours and records with a passion that flows into the hearts, heads and feet of his audiences, and continues to push his musicianship to a place where other guitarists fear to tread. Nobody knows where Preston Reed's journey will take him next – not even the man himself. The one thing we know for sure is that it'll be one hell of a ride.

"In a class of his own" **London Evening Standard**

"... a major musical talent" **Manchester Evening News**

"True spellbinding guitar mastery" **Guitarist Magazine**

"Will drop your jaw" **Playboy**

"Heart stopping tour de force" **Billboard**

"Reed's fiendishly intricate blend of blues, rock, country and metal styles ducks and weaves itself away from measurability" **The Irish Times**

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