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David Youngs

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You might be surprised to discover the lengths to which some people will go to secure a positive review in these pages. Only last week, for instance, I opened a Jiffy bag to find a crisp 50 pence piece taped to a CD jewel case, and the editorial kitchen is positively groaning with promotional mugs. Until now, our integrity has not wavered, but David Youngs might well have hit on the ultimate way of bullet-proofing his CD against negative comments: he's hired SOS's own Mike Senior to mix it.

Of course, it's always possible that Mike was hired less to neuter critical barbs and more for his ability to turn a modest home recording into something altogether slicker-sounding, and this he has definitely achieved. The mark of a good mix is that your ear is drawn to the music rather than the engineering. In this case, the ear immediately forgets about reverbs and EQ, and sends startled messages along the lines of 'Bloody hell, how does he do that?!'

Transience is an album of solo acoustic guitar pieces, and Youngs's musicianship is quite simply astonishing. He specialises in the kind of percussive effects and rapid-fire two-handed tapping pioneered by guitarists like Eric Roche, and the precision with which he executes it is remarkable. What's more, his extraordinary technical ability is married with genuine compositional talent, so that nothing here comes across as empty showboating. A sympathetic mix is, as it should be, just the icing on the cake. Sam Inglis

www.davidyoungs.net

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