



# Don Alder

*“Don is Canada’s secret fingerstyle weapon... it’s only a matter of time until everyone discovers this world class player.”*

*“Alder can make a single instrument sound like a four-piece band.*

*The guy’s like the acoustic Hendrix.”*

## HIGH OCTANE ACOUSTIC PERFORMER

Canada’s own Don Alder is one of the best acoustic guitarists in the world, and one of Canada’s premiere harp guitarists. His unique style and energetic performances have been called intense, passionate and awe-inspiring – as is his life-long friendship with Canada’s Man In Motion Rick Hansen.

Don’s unique style of playing incorporates fingerpicking with simultaneous percussion on the soundboard to create a wall of sound...a unique weave of deeply textured melody and story. Lyrical and compelling, his original songs are notes of exploration – some passionate and haunting, some hard-driven, others light and teasing. In quiet pieces or pushing right to the edge, Don’s phenomenal fingerstyle playing and rich voice captivate.

In special performances, Don tells the story of his friendship with Rick Hansen. After meeting on a high school basketball court, Don and Rick were together in the vehicle accident that rendered Rick a paraplegic. They would travel around the world on the Man In Motion World Tour, and Don continues to work with the Rick Hansen Foundation today.

This is a story of friendship, inspiration, pursuing dreams and making a difference in the lives of others.

## AWARDS INCLUDE:

- 1ST - 2007 International Guitar Fingerpicking Contest
- 2ND - 2006 International Fingerstyle Championships
- 1ST - 2004, 2005, 2006 Winfield Song Showcase *Best Instrumental*
- 1ST - 2005 Best 30-second Guitar Solo Contest - Acidplanet.com

FINALIST - International Acoustic Music Awards

- 3RD - 2005 Vancouver BC Star Discovery
- 1ST - 2004 Vancouver Folk Slam
- 1ST - 2004 Winfield Intl. Fingerstyle Championships *Best Instrumental*
- 1ST - 2004 Vancouver Guitar Show *Shred Contest* using an acoustic

## DISCOGRAPHY

- Cool Tunes Compilation*
- Don Alder Combo CD/DVD*
- Fingerstyle All Stars DVD*
- Take the Train Eh!*

## ENDORSEMENTS

- Yamaha Guitars Canada
- Dean Markley Strings
- DTAR

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## BIOGRAPHY

**Canada's own Don Alder is one of the best acoustic guitarists in the world, and one of Canada's premiere harp guitarists.**

His unique style and energetic performances have been called intense, passionate and awe-inspiring. The reigning champion at the prestigious Winfield, Kansas 2007 International Fingerstyle Championships, he is often referred to as the acoustic Hendrix. Today, he plays to audiences around the world; writes and performs all of his own music, and has released five albums – with another due this year.

Born in Vancouver, followed by a few years in Montreal, Don grew up in Williams Lake, BC, a shy boy, who found pleasure in playing his guitar. After befriending a confident, athletic Rick Hansen on a basketball court, life-changing journeys began. When the boys were fifteen, the truck in which they were riding home from a fishing trip, overturned. Don walked away, and Rick broke his back, never to walk again.

Not one to give up on a dream, Rick became a world-class athlete. Later he courageously wheeled around the world to raise awareness of the potential of people with disabilities, and funds for spinal cord

injury research, with Don on his team. Working as a studio musician at the time, Don put his music career on hold to join the Man In Motion World Tour. Over two years later (1985-1987), the team returned to Canada and a hero's welcome. Don learned about courage and determination, and credits Hansen for inspiring him to pursue his dream of a musical career. He became motivated by a desire to make a difference for other people. He volunteered to share his knowledge of wheelchair mechanics and performance with other wheelchair athletes, and was chosen as Canada's Equipment Manager / Wheelchair Tech for the Canadian Paralympic Team in Atlanta (1996) and Sydney, Australia (2000).

He joined the Vancouver Adapted Music Society's performance band *Spinal Chord* formed by musicians with a disability, and released the CD *Why Be Normal*. Later, Don joined the Rick Hansen Foundation, to work with his friend to improve quality of life of people with spinal cord injury and help make Canada an inclusive and accessible society. In addition to being Technical Production Manager, he delivers special musical presentations to schools and communities, hoping to inspire others with his story of friendship, pursuing a dream and making a difference for others.

Don developed a unique style of playing, which incorporates fingerpicking with simultaneous percussion on the soundboard...a unique weave of deeply textured melody and story. Lyrical and compelling, his original songs – a cross between progressive folk and modern pop – are passionate and haunting, some hard-driven, others light and teasing.

His awards include *Best Instrumental* in the Winfield (Kansas) Song Showcases in 2004, 2005 and 2006; 4th of 300 international candidates at the prestigious European Fingerstyle Competition Open Strings Festival in Germany; first place in the 2004 Vancouver Folk Slam and the Vancouver Guitar Show *Shred Contest* using just an acoustic guitar; *Best 30-Second Instrumental* for Week #6 on Acidplanet.com; and 3rd at the BC Star Discovery, 2004 and 2005.

Don has also created original commissioned works for television, radio, theatre, feature films, documentaries and videos, and has endorsements with Yamaha Canada and Dean Markley Strings. His music videos can be seen on youtube.com.



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## PERFORMANCE REVIEW

I had the pleasure of catching Vancouver guitarist, Don Alder's performance recently at the Mellow Side, in Cowichan Bay Village.

Don Alder's manner is very personable and down to earth. His fresh-faced appearance belies the years of experience and experimentation behind impressive techniques used effectively.

His right hand dances like a hummingbird over the strings. Left and right hands alternately tap, bend strings, and strike percussively.

Don has accomplished a lot, but still approaches his playing and composing with the student's mind, setting new goals to reach for. Don tells me his style is changing, moving to more elaborate arrangements. There are plenty of finger style guitar pyrotechniques in his performance with banjo style rolls, lightning-fast hammer-ons and pull-offs. Don decided earlier on in his career to become a singer / songwriter because there was more opportunity to perform, considering the limited avenues for instrumentalists.

His lyrics are honest, heart-felt and concise, from *Walking Back To You in the Rain* to *I Won't Be Home*, a song written while accompanying Rick Hansen on his wheelchair journey of thousands of miles. A grooving, catchy beat complemented Don's soft, smooth voice in *Stage Five / Stage One*, where he ventured into some scat singing and swing-style vocals. The right-hand work on *Taiwan Traffic Jam* was amazing. Through high-speed fingering and picking Don kept the pace unerringly. Keep an eye out for Don Alder and catch his show if he is ever in your area.

- Guy Langlois is Publisher and Webmaster of Cosmic Debris Musicians Magazine, May 2005

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## CD REVIEWS

### **Cool Tunes Compilation CD**, May 2006

This Canadian fingerstyle guitarist is a card-carrying member of the very spare catalogue of full-spectrum players utilizing a number of techniques to wring as much as possible from the soloist role as an instrumentalist. Because he has the uncanny ability to play solo runs within the chords he's strumming while also percussing the guitar's sound-box, it's rightly said that Don Alder sounds like a small ensemble. For just one instrument per tune, Alder never fails to lack for fulsome atmospheres, a trait too many other such ventures fail to capture at all. If the endless barrage of sappy and weak New Age solo guitar LPs that flooded the market years ago left you despairing of what the instrument and human hands were capable of, Cool Tunes Compilation will restore that crestfallen attitude to its properly beaming estate. - Mark S. Tucker, *the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange*

### **Take the Train Eh!**, 2005

Every track is breath-taking but *The Sheriff* stands out as astonishingly well-crafted. The release boasts his only try in the vocal realm...and he's pretty damn good in that department, as well. To watch his fretwork would be entrancing. I once sat agape at a Ralph Towner solo gig at McCabe's and just the play of his hands over the fretboard was purest poetry - Alder's in that camp, especially in cuts like *Take the Train Eh!* Oh, and Alder's been deeply involved with work for debilitated people who are striving to keep a vital full presence in society, engaged especially with lifelong friend Rick Hansen, now a world-famed figure, a rather dauntingly dynamic individual and mega-athlete. Yep, you read correctly: Hansen, who operates from a wheelchair, suffers from a spinal cord injury sustained in an accident but is a world-class athlete nonetheless. Link in with Alder's website, and go to the story. Pretty amazing.

- Mark S. Tucker, *the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange*

### **The Acoustiholic**, 2003

Most artists who arrive on the scene with acoustic guitar-in-hand proclaim themselves as either fingerstylists or singer-songwriters, but hardly ever both. Don Alder is an artist able to wear both hats quite comfortably. The former Winfield competitor and student of Don Ross can kick up his heels instrumentally but can also put his vocals and songwriting up on ear-catching display. - © Alan Fark, [www.minor7th.com/shorttakes8\\_03.html](http://www.minor7th.com/shorttakes8_03.html)

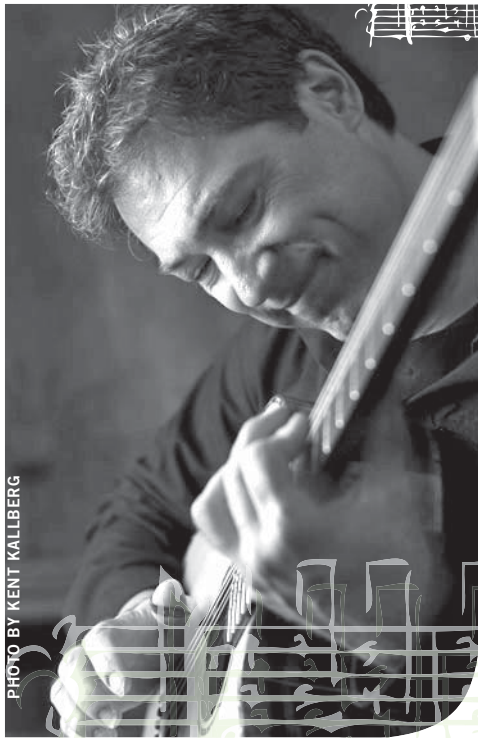
### **The Best of Don Alder**, 2005

Top-notch guitar fingerstylist Don Alder compiles a dozen gems from his formidable collection that's as pleasant as it's impressive. Based in Vancouver, British Columbia, Alder intertwines his fingerpicking with percussion on his soundboard for a smooth but surprisingly propulsive effect. This solo, acoustic, instrumental disc features Alder's own compositions, which are invariably marked by their expressiveness. They range from the galloping Western of *Nutberry Farm* to the bittersweet *Marshall's Lanai* to the swinging *Granny on the Run*. His liner notes reveal compositional tidbits, adding to the fun, and also offer a glimpse into the huge heart of this versatile musician.

- © Fred Kraus, [www.minor7th.com/shorttakes2\\_06.html](http://www.minor7th.com/shorttakes2_06.html)

### **Take the Train Eh?** 2005

Don Alder's new album *Take the Train Eh?* is a groovy and up tempo album with extraordinary techniques on his selected guitars. This album is a solo guitar album with Don's warm expressive voice. Don starts off with *Dr. Dr.* which is full of astonishing techniques, tapping, slapping, percussion and a brilliant groove. *Meeting Pierre...* embodies a lot of space and structure with a fine gentle touch. One of my favourites is *It's Only Goodbye* which has all a good song needs, balance, structure and emotion. One thing is clear Don Alder has his own significant signature which covers all capabilities in finger-style music. Don Alder writes all his songs which can compete with the best guitarists in the circuit. Seldom one sees so much quality and versatility in one guitarist. Don Alder succeeds with this album to impress any serious acoustic guitarist and listener. - Henk te Veldhuis © 2005, <http://www.xs4all.nl/~guitars/balance.html>



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## TESTIMONIALS

### Schools

“Don, the concert you gave was one of the highlights of the year for me... I think it was a huge testament to you and your performance that so many of our students wanted to stay behind to talk to you and ask questions following your concert. I thought it was fabulous the way you invited them to the stage and then kept them enthralled with your answers to their questions and your explanations of some of your playing techniques. Well done and thanks again.”

- Wayne Sawyer, Band Teacher, Terry Fox Senior Secondary

### Festivals

“I want to thank you for your delightful festival spirit and for sharing your wonderfully creative and inspiring music with us. Your amazing talent yet down to earth presence has contributed to the Kispiox Valley Music Festival's continuing success.”

- Ricki Kneifel, Festival Organizer / Musician, Kispiox Valley Music Festival

### Clubs

“What a thrill to have the wonderfully talented Don Alder perform at our event, the Alibi Unplugged Script Reading Series. A strong, ear-pleasing voice, smart lyrics and truly impressive fingerstyle guitar – this guy has it all, and brings it to every song. Usually, the film-savvy crowd is busy drinking and schmoozing, waiting for the film script reading to begin. Not this time. The 200-seat Arts Club Revue Theatre filled up early, as people were pulled from the bar and lobby once they heard Don's sweet tunes pouring forth. Truly a pleasure – we can't wait to have Don back for another special occasion – if we are lucky enough to get him again!”

- Peter Graham-Gaudreau and Anita Adams, Music Co-ordinator and Founder of the Alibi Unplugged Script Reading Series

### Luthiers

“I was so impressed with Don Alder's performance at the Healdsburg Guitar Festival this year. I found his imaginative playing style, ranging from explosive to gentle, to be a thrill to hear and see. Coupled with an excellent voice, he is definitely on my list of favorite musicians: Peppino D'Agostino, Pierre Bensusan, Michael Hedges and Leo Kottke to name a few.”

- Rick Micheletti, Luthier

“Don is an amazing guitarist, a one man mosh-pit. If you're within 100 miles of a performance, go see this guy.”

- Master Luthier, Matt Mustapick

“Don has a charged and rhythmic guitar style that is rich in tonal color...his command of the instrument is evident and his talent as a composer hard to beat. Don's performances and repertory palette run the emotional gamut. It just doesn't get much better than this! Don is Canada's secret fingerstyle weapon...it's only a matter of time until everyone discovers this world class player.”

- Michael Greenfield, Luthier, Greenfield Guitars

### Endorser

“We are extremely proud to have Don as a National Endorsee. We recognize that Don is at the forefront of the 'new fingerstyle' movement and look forward to a long relationship with this mind-blowing guitarist.”

- Chris Seldon, Marketing Manager, Yamaha Guitars Canada