

# Soundscaping

You might not have heard of his name, but you would have heard his music. Film score writer, composer, arranger and rising star, Paul Leonard Morgan has ventured out on his own with his stunning debut album, *Film Tales*

WORDS • KATHRYN CLARK

“I know you’re going to laugh, but I used to play the recorder very seriously,” says Paul Leonard Morgan. “My father is tone deaf and my mother is a music teacher, and the recorder was one of her ideas. I played the piano as my main instrument, as well as the violin and viola. I’ve neglected my recorder for the last few years – funnily enough, I never made that much money out of it.”

It is clear that the excitable 33-year-old was blessed with his mother’s genes. Despite his humble beginnings in Scotland, Paul has managed to acquire a suitcase of awards including the BAFTA best new composer award when he was just 25, and an Ivor Novello nomination for his score for ITV’s *Fallen*. He has successfully collaborated with a disparate cast of film and music stars from Belle and Sebastian to Craig Armstrong (the composer of the *Moulin Rouge* film score),

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and has written several TV scores including the BBC drama *Spooks*. There are few who would question Paul’s rising star today.

2007 has been a busy year for Mr Leonard Morgan. Paul has found himself in high demand and working on several projects at once, notably including the new US Olympic anthem – a rare honor for a British composer. So how does he keep his musical ideas in order? “I have music going around my head all the time – I hum constantly,” he says. “This can be annoying for other people because I have a short attention span. Don’t worry, you’re safe over there. But seriously, I am always working on one project and inventing music for another one in my head. Every so often, a director will tell me ‘make this scene romantic’ and I revert to my *Spooks* score, which is all car chases and M15 drama.”

Revealingly, it was Paul’s celebrity clients who urged him to write his own album; *Film Tales* was recently unleashed upon the world. “I wanted to get the people I had enjoyed working with on their projects to come and work on mine,” he says. “The problem was, I’d forgotten what my style was. I hadn’t written anything of my own for three to four years, and it was really daunting. But I soon realised I didn’t have the same pressure to present my work to anyone – I’m the only one that has to be pleased with it. If other people like it, well that’s a bonus. And that was liberating. So I would say [writing *Film Tales*] has been a half-liberating experience for me.”

Receiving sporadic attention between various other projects, such as the stunning BBC documentary *Galápagos*, Paul’s half-liberating project morphed into a unique work of psy-orchestral audio landscapes, effortless beats and ethereal vocals. Multi-dimensional musical journeys are punctuated by stellar performances by the likes of Isobel Campbell, Esther O’Connor and Steve Mason (the former Beta Band frontman). “The instrumentals were great, but it was the collaborations that really made the album,” Paul says. “Working with Steve Mason was absolutely fantastic. I was so nervous waiting for him to play his version of my song. What if he didn’t like it?”

But Mason did like it. And so did everyone else, including the critics. “It has been an amazing experience,” Paul says. “Each song has a good memory for a different reason. I adore working with people. It’s such a buzz.”

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