



SONGS FROM THE CITY

From pop and TV music to the US Olympic theme, Paul Leonard-Morgan is a crossover composer who just can't stop, writes *Chitra Ramaswamy*

CHANCES are you won't have heard of Paul Leonard-Morgan, but you will definitely know his music. Perhaps it's through Snow Patrol, The Young Knives, or Belle and Sebastian, all of whom have made use of his remarkable talent as a producer and arranger over the years. Perhaps most notably, Leonard-Morgan did the string arrangements on the Mercury-nominated collaboration between Isobel Campbell and Mark Lanegan, *Ballad Of The Broken Seas*, and has also recently worked on the duo's highly anticipated follow-up.

Then there are the many projects with Scottish composer Craig Armstrong. In fact Armstrong's Glasgow studio is less than 10 yards from Leonard-Morgan's, where we meet, and they have been friends ever since they rented spaces next to each other in the city's famous CaVa studios, alongside Belle and Sebastian, Snow Patrol and Mogwai in the late Nineties. "I remember Craig was working with the Pet Shop Boys," Leonard-Morgan recalls. "He'd been up all night and gone to bed and the Pet Shop Boys came over to the studio looking for him. I answered the door, had no idea who they were, and told them to go away because I was busy working on a project. When

Craig introduced me to them later in the pub, I was like, 'oh shit'.

"Craig's a top lad, and he's been really supportive," he adds, and then says with a grin, "I nick all his themes." It's a joke, of course, but there are many similarities between the two composers, though one is at the apex of his career, while the other is a 33-year-old at the start. Both are crossover artists who score lush orchestral music for film and television, and also work with bands. Not many manage to pull off straddling the worlds of classical and pop, film and television, commercial and artistic.

Until now Leonard-Morgan would easily have qualified as one of Glasgow's best-kept secrets, despite having won the Bafta for Best New Composer aged just 25, and gaining an Ivor Novello nomination for his score to ITV drama, *Fallen*. That's all about to change.

For a start he has his first album coming out. *Filmtales* is a rich and eclectic collection of vocal and instrumental songs featuring, among others, Isobel Campbell and Steve Mason (Beta Band), and is reminiscent of Massive Attack trip hop, Sixties cinema, and Armstrong-esque orchestras. "It's taken long enough," Leonard-Morgan admits. "It feels cool, though weird after working on it for two-and-a-half years. It was Isobel who

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said to me, have you never thought of doing your own stuff? I was like, I've been doing soundtracks and working with bands for a while now. I can't remember my own style!"

Leonard-Morgan is exhausted. He has been up all night working on the soundtrack to the second series of the BBC drama *Spooks* - he also did the first. We get seated with cups of herbal tea (Leonard-Morgan gave up caffeine a year ago because he was drinking too much in order to stay up late at work). A frozen frame from *Spooks* of actress Hermione Norris fills a television screen in his spacious, airy studio. He has just two days to finish this commission, and claims he probably won't get the chance to sleep until it's done.

"It's great being so busy," he says. "But sometimes it would be nice to take a step back to just enjoy the moment. Mind you, I get bored really easily. It's not like I've got attention deficit disorder, but I may as well have." It's true, Leonard-Morgan is something of a livewire, playing me clips from *Spooks*, jumping about between stories, all the while apologising for not making any sense because he is so tired.

What's evident is how much he loves what he does. Recently he has been working on Sharleen Spiteri's first solo effort, which he tells me has got





Which brings me to something else Leonard-Morgan mentions, a lot. Though he has an unmistakable London accent, his mother, a music teacher, is Scottish and that's what compelled him to come and study in Glasgow 15 years ago. He's been here ever since. "I know I've got this silly accent and everything, but I'm Scottish, honest," he says with a laugh. "I've got a studio in London but I never feel inspired in it the way I do here. It was the same with my album. I wanted to keep it Scottish, rather than just getting anyone involved. The label asked if I could just get one big star, but I said, that's not what this is about for me." ❖

Filmtales is out in mid-October, EMI/Rage Music
<http://www.myspace.com/paulleonardmorgan>;
www.filmtales.com

a Motown vibe, and legendary artist Peter Saville has been in touch to ask if he can use a track from Leonard-Morgan's album to accompany one of his artworks appearing on an Audi ad. Leonard-Morgan is ambitious and wants to score big Hollywood movies, and write orchestral pieces for classical repertoire. He also wants to keep working with bands, and names Paulo Nutini and Massive Attack on his wishlist.

Apart from *Filmtales*, which deserves to establish Leonard-Morgan as the Craig Armstrong of his generation, there is his latest, and perhaps biggest

Livewire: Leonard-Morgan in his Glasgow studio yards from Craig Armstrong, above right. He is also working on the music for *Spooks* and with Sharleen Spiteri.

Main photograph: Robert Perry

commission yet. Earlier this year he put in a pitch for the new anthem for the US Olympic team. Out of more than 1,000 entries, he won. Considering the last anthem was written by John Williams, of *Star Wars* and *ET* fame, it's a major coup.

"Last week I got flown to Colorado for the launch," says Leonard-Morgan, who trained at the RSAMD under composers James MacMillan and John Maxwell Geddes. "I had to do a performance on the piano in front of the entire American press, all the Olympics people, the heads of Coke, Visa and sponsorship. I got there and saw this huge concert hall and all these people and was like, wow, there must be some pretty important people coming. Then someone explained that they were all there to see me." Already, the commission is opening more doors. A fortnight ago he got a call from Philip Glass's US agent asking if he could represent him.

The anthem was recorded in Glasgow's City Halls in July. Leonard-Morgan was too busy to go overseas, so in the end he brought America to him. "It was a total buzz," he says. "All the American crew came over and halfway through the recording I turned round and the guy whose idea it was to commission a new anthem in the first place was in tears. They were totally blown away by Scotland, which made me feel really proud."

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