

Sevendust's Clint Lowery:

Acoustic With an Edge

ATLANTA-BASED AGGRO-ROCKERS SEVENDUST HAVE JUST RELEASED AN unplugged album. But don't get the idea they've mellowed out.

"We put on what has to be the heaviest acoustic show ever," claims Clint Lowery, who shares guitar duties in Sevendust with John Connolly. "The comment we get from a lot of fans is, 'That's the most aggressive acoustic concert I've ever seen!' We're not John Denver-ing it up there — we're strumming real hard."

According to Lowery, Sevendust fans weren't the only people who needed convincing that the acoustic album was a good idea. "Our label wasn't all that interested at first. We were cautious too because we didn't want it to seem like we were trying to market ourselves as some sort of more commercial acoustic band. At first we planned to do a limited release, just for our fan club. But we did a small tour, and it just started to snowball. We filmed one of the shows in Athens, Georgia, and it turned out better than we thought it would. Eventually the label jumped on the bandwagon, and now it's going to be a full-on release." The album, *Southside Double-Wide Acoustic Live*, includes songs selected from Sevendust's four studio albums, plus a cover of Nine Inch Nails' "Hurt."

"We really had to change some of the heavier songs to transfer them over to acoustic," says Lowery. "We changed structures and parts so that they'd make sense. We simplified a lot of things, stripping them down to the basic chord structure."

These days Lowery is playing a pair of handcrafted Yamaha acoustics: a jumbo cutaway LJX6C and a standard-sized LLX6. "These Yamahas are just incredible guitars," he says. "The second I picked them up, I wanted to start writing. In fact, I came up with four songs right away. Their natural acoustic sounds are great. And when I plugged the jumbo into my recorder, it sounded crystal-clear — with no compression or EQ or anything."

For Lowery, the acoustic experiment isn't as out-of-character as some might suppose. "I'm a huge fan of acoustic music," he says. "I like Sarah McLachlan. India.Arie has beautiful acoustic playing in her music. And my dad, Willie Lowery, makes his living playing acoustic guitar. He's played all his life — country, zydeco, funk,

lounge. He's based out of North Carolina where he has a studio. He's my idol."

Yet Clint's first instrument was drums — because, he explains, he wanted to play with his dad. But the younger Lowery eventually switched over to guitar, studying with North Carolina instructor Robbie Greene and eventually fulfilling his wish of playing with his father. "We'd play old songs like 'A Whiter Shade of Pale' and Otis Redding stuff," recalls Clint. "It was great to learn the chord progressions for all those old songs."

Clint eventually made his way to Atlanta, where the members of Sevendust starting jamming in 1995. But the band was not immediately embraced by their hometown. "To be honest, there wasn't a lot of support for us at the beginning," says Lowery. "We were the black sheep of the scene. We didn't get much support from other bands, and there was definitely no support from local magazines or radio. It took us a long time to get some love from Atlanta! But it made us want to work that much harder to get the respect we thought we deserved."

Over the years Lowery, and co-guitarist Connolly have settled into a seamless division of labor. "At the beginning," says Clint, "John was the rhythm-holder, and I was the texture guy. Maybe that's because he'd only been playing guitar for about five years. But he grew as a player and started picking up on the texture things I was doing. So now he usually does the texture and the lines for the songs he writes, while I hold down the rhythm. For the songs I write, it's the other way around."

The two also share similar compositional styles. "We start in our own little home studios, where we put together outlines for songs. We each bring ten or eleven ideas into rehearsal, and then we listen to everything as a band and decide which ones to jam on. We usually agree on which ones sound the best, and those are the ones we start putting vocals on. In the end, our records tend to be about half his song ideas and half mine. Plus, after working together for so many years, we tend to write a little bit alike. We inspire and motivate each other."

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