

Speaking to Steve Howe At the Queen's Hall Solo – Homebrew 6

☒ The acclaimed guitarist Steve Howe was in Edinburgh in October and appeared on stage at The Queen's Hall accompanied only by a sound engineer and a few of his many guitars.

Steve said: "I have played there a couple of times. When started doing these shows back in the early 1990s I had a Scottish agent and I used to play up in Scotland a great deal more and I used to play the Queen's Hall so I must have played it a few times solo. It's a lovely place and I'm really looking forward to it. I remember some early solo shows there and it was really captivating."

We asked Steve why he had started the solo tours, as he is still busy with YES and in fact will be off to Japan on a tour with them in November. He explained it came about through the influence of guitarist Chet Atkins on his work. "Chet Atkins was a Nashville guitarist who made a lot of records and he played on his own for quite a lot of them. He also played with a band. I guess instead of trying to copy him which would have been very difficult as his technique was amazing I decided to write my own pieces. First I wrote CLAP and then I kept on writing music for myself. They are not amazingly difficult to play. I purposely play some things that are not too difficult as I don't really want to just be flash about it! I like things that are melodic and that was definitely a part of the Chet education too. When he plays it's always beautifully melodic. So that planted the seed of doing solo shows and I do them in much the same way as when I started out. My first tour was called Not Necessarily Acoustic.

“Before that I had played at the Montreux Jazz Festival solo back in 1979 and I had done spots where I had come along and played for 20 minutes or so, and I got a taste for it. It is truly somewhere else to playing with bands. The whole thing is quite different! I like the flexibility in the solo show a lot.

“My current solo release is called Homebrew 6 and that is also the name of this tour. I wanted to record at home just like Les Paul and Chet Atkins had done too. The music I write for playing solo has quite a different flavour. I pick a song – probably the opening song on the album and play that but all my CDs are pretty hard to reproduce solo except Motif which was the first time I had only done solo pieces on the whole CD. These were new pieces as well as better versions of pieces that had mainly been played live. Doing this solo show is very special to me.

“Virtually everything on Homebrew is recorded in my home studio which is only an eight track studio and so is pretty limited!”