



# Roland Nipp

## Do-It-Yourselfer

**T**he new album by Canadian guitarist Roland Nipp is full of wonderful sounds, great melodies that turn into great songs, and fine playing.

*Little Victories* was a true labor of love, done in his house, by himself, with Pro Tools. "I have a child and a family, so it was early in the morning and late at night."

Unusual, perhaps. But not unheard of. A part-time guitar teacher, Nipp works a non-musical day job and is assembling a band to play live in support of the record. "One problem in Vancouver is that there are not a lot of live venues that support original music, let alone *instrumental* original music," he said. "It's not exactly trendy."

Nipp wrote all 10 songs on the record and played all the instruments. "Guitar is my first instrument, so I'm comfortable with that. I do have a keyboard and bass background, as well, so luckily, that's not much of a problem. To me, the challenge is the songwriting. It's like, 'What do I want to hear as a listener.'

Before I became a guitar player, I was a listener and a music fan, and that's what it comes down to. I don't want to make a musician's album full of chops and notes. That's not what drives me to put on a song for the second, third, or 20th time when I'm listening. And it could be anything that draws you to a song. It could be the composition or the overall sound, feeling, mood, or performance. That's what's great about music. We all respond to it in different ways for different reasons."

A self-taught guitarist, Nipp cites

"song guy" guitarists as his influences. Among them are Mike Campbell, George Harrison, Steve Lukather, Neil Schon, and Brian May. He's also a fan of soloists like Mark Knopfler, Robben Ford, Larry Carlton, Billy Gibbons, and Django Reinhardt. And for a guy recording instrumental records, he also feels pop/rock songwriters have been a strong influence, pointing to the Beatles, early Elton John, Springsteen, Stevie Wonder, Steely Dan, Tom Petty, Neil Young, and Coldplay, among others. A lot of that, he says, may come from playing in bands while growing up. "I played in lots of cover bands. It's great training, because your job is to emulate great players, stylistically and sound-wise. It's a really good learning ground. It *does* kind of work against you, though, when you're trying to be original and trying to find your own voice. You're not really rewarded or encouraged to be yourself when you're coming up."

Nipp has always been a fan of what he calls "the Holy Trinity" of guitars – the Gibson Les Paul, Fender Telecaster, and Fender Stratocaster. "My first and favorite guitar is Strat. The one you hear most on the record is a '91 with DiMarzio HS-3 pickups. For the meatier, thicker tones, I used a '99 Les Paul Standard and my '52 reissue Tele."

Nipp confesses to recording mostly with an amp emulator, but quickly adds that in a live setting, he runs a Vox AC30.

Ask him about effects and Nipp will say you can "never have enough." His pedalboard, shown in the CD liner notes, reaffirms that sentiment. In his music, the pedals can be very useful for transitions in songs. "In writing instrumentals, how do I create transitions? How do I separate parts? How do I move the piece along? You can, of course, use tempo and chord changes, but I think about effects in that sense, too. You can introduce a tremolo or a flanger, and it doesn't have to be overt, but it's enough to act as a transition."

Looking to the future, Nipp says he'll let things happen as they may. His love

and enthusiasm for music and the guitar haven't changed much since he was a teen. "I was the kid at school dances standing at the front of the stage, oblivious to the fact people were actually dancing. It was an event to see the band, you know? At 13, it was a great feeling to

play. And to this day it just feels really nice to play guitar. Songwriting can be a bit harder, but when it comes to playing the guitar, it's never work. It's always fun." – **John Heidt**

*Little Victories*



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