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National Arts and Entertainment Chicago Live Music Examiner



Florian Opahle - Young, talented guitarist.

October 18, 6:18 PM Chicago Live Music Examiner Roger Reis



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Florian Opahle From the photo gallery on his website

Two unbelievable hands make a guitar player. Strokes from the picking hand need to be executed in precise motions to guide the fingering hand and allow it to perform within a synchronized fashion. One of the most talented sets of hands to touch a guitar in music in a long time is Florian Opahle. He is young, but he doesn't come forward without some serious musical chops.

Currently on tour with Ian Anderson of Jethro Tull, Florian has impressed the hell out of several die hard fans filling the mighty big shoes of Martin Barre. Only twenty-six years of age, he has been involved with music since the age of three and has a long list of accolades already. Besides playing with Ian, he also has worked Greg Lake, Chris Thompson, and James Duncan on a few assignments. He has shared the stage with Al DiMeola at a guitar work-shop setting, but is mostly involved in writing and orchestration as a session musician so far.

He has quite an impressive resume for his young age and considers it a great honor to be able to play with some musicians that have been around for over forty years. "I'm really lucky and very thankful for what I have done. Working with Ian is nice. Being a young musician I'm always learning. The approach to do stuff has changed. I've learned to listen to what's happening on stage and sometimes less is more."

Opahle grew up in Munich, Germany where he still lives. He was sent to a music school at the age of three and given a great opportunity to play with musical instruments in his formative years. At about 5 years old he started in on playing the guitar. Rather than pushing him, his parents supported and encouraged him at the start. His experience grew at a rapid pace and by the time he was fourteen he already knew he was going to be involved in music as a career. He studied composition and began to evolve into quite a talented musician. He played on his first CD in 2,000 and has been a working musician ever since.

On guitar he is influenced by Steve Lukather, Al DiMeola, and John McLaughlin just to name a few. He states, "Don't want to be the next Jimi Hendrix because you just can't be the next Jimi Hendrix. I would be happy to keep touring and being like what Martin Barre has done, touring for forty years. I'd be much happier doing that"

His equipment setup is very modest to say the least. For electric guitars he uses mostly Gibson, which has been a logical choice for guitar players for over fifty years. For his main amp a Vox with Eminence speakers completes his sound with crystal clarity. Boss and a few MIDI setups are what he uses the most for effects depending on the sound that is needed for that current project.

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Highly skilled in classical, rock, blues, jazz, and fusion, it's really hard to pinpoint a particular style Florian is experienced in the most. He can't be classified as a rock guitarist or a jazz guitarist, he is simply a guitarist. This young man can play anything and has done so for some larger audiences. He has played in front of audiences of 15,000 with Ian Anderson and been on T.V. for an approximate audience of one million viewers.

Besides guitar he also can play bass quite well, has some experience on piano and drums, but mostly just some basic stuff. Guitar will always be the main instrument in his hands and with the incredible flamenco styles he is able to play no other instruments are needed. It is abundantly clear that this young man is going to be one of the greatest guitar players ever to exist. His fast paced picking style is melodic and never boring. His guitar licks are interesting to listen to and within his leads you can tell he listened to some of his idols such as Steve Lukather and Al DiMeola. He has seen Lukather play at a Toto concert in Munich and said it was just one of the best times he ever had. He has looked up to some great guitar players and truly learned a lot from them.

On tour in America for the first time, Florian is enjoying it quite well from a seat on a tour bus. He says, "The fans are really treating me well and everyone has been so nice." Half way through a twenty city tour he is enjoying what he has been trained and meant to do. He looks a little timid and shy on stage next to the overly confident Ian Anderson. "Playing next to him is great because he knows exactly what to do."

Working with Ian lately has taken up a lot of his free time. He is going to be working with Chris Thompson from Manfred Mann and seems to be a guitarist that is sought out by classic rock artists. Some of his sound clips can be heard on his website that reads like a resume: <http://www.florian-opahle.com/>

Opahle was asked what he thought about games like Guitar Hero. He responded, "It's interesting, it's fun, and different. With someone with no experience it's a thrill. It's nothing like playing guitar and it's really not the same. Your hands don't quite move in the same way." For a guitarist who can play the riffs on a real guitar, he doesn't need to mess around with such a game other than for fun. He can actually play for real.

Being the youngest member currently working within the Jethro Tull circle of musicians is a hell of an accomplishment. He obviously didn't get to hold that position because he couldn't play. His hands are as talented as anyone else that has ever held a six string. His fingers are fast, skilled, and able to play intricate pieces with a flawless approach. Watching and listening to him play is something that is suggested for all of mankind. It's always a treat to see a musician as talented as Florian Opahle.

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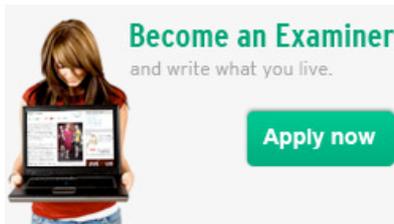
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Ray says:

I saw him with Ian Anderson at the Vic. He is a phenomenal guitar player. Can't wait to see him again.

October 20, 7:36 PM

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