

## MANNING

**Akoustik 2** F2/FESTIVAL

The artist leafs through his back pages, with new tunes to boot.

**G**uy Manning's first (mostly) unplugged return to musical pastures old was 2012's *Akoustik*. Given his lo-fi production of late, that and this follow-up aren't too far removed from his elektrik milieu. Once again, *Akoustik 2* is well worth the trip. Among the old glories unearthed is the insistent *White Waters*. In Marek Arnold's call-and-response sax, there's a hint of the resolutely un-prog Bruce Springsteen's *Secret Garden*. This pared-down setting is all the better for hearing the lovingly crafted lyrics of, say, *Songs From The Bilston House*, lifted here by Steve Dundon's jaunty flute. Relieved of its



dated synths and with a superior vocal *Flight 19* (from 2001's *Cascade*) is a highlight, and three new songs bode well too. The mid-tempo *Yesterday's Hero* is freighted with Manning's trademark fatalism and adorned by Ian Fairbairn's fiddle. The similarly thoughtful *Moorland Skies* sees the hero 'crossing mansions of ragged stone', with a modulation evoking a *Boulders*-era Roy Wood perhaps. The sweetly nostalgic *Saturday Picture Show* sees him reminiscing about cosy weekend telly watching, from *Grandstand* to *Doctor Who*. If he's softening with age, it suits him. **GRM**