

PAUL BEZOYEN – “Another World” (The Hermit’s Music)

Albeit unexpectedly, my wife and I received a live preview of the sprawling title track of this new instrumental acoustic guitar collection from Paul Bezooyen at an impromptu jam at my home last year. Also present and equally dazzled by it were our mutual friends, the excellent folk-pop duo Flagship Romance – visiting/on tour from New Mexico – and the delightful Comox Valley-based singer-songwriter, Gina Davis, both of whom also performed off the cuff. It was quite a night.

Paul’s track was a real and surprising standout of that spirited gathering, yet as a distinctly flamenco-flavoured piece it’s totally unlike anything he’s ever delivered before. Now standing as the centrepiece of *Another World*, it’s a lovely illustration of Paul’s increasing proficiency, confidence, and sense of adventure as a guitarist. To this end there can be no doubt that he’s drawing influence from one of his musical idols, Bruce Cockburn, whose latest release, *Crowing Ignites*, just happens to be an instrumental guitar offering (his second such project, and – gasp! - 34th album overall), but, hey, when was taking inspiration from a genius in their field ever a bad thing in developing your own art?

Interestingly, concerning his solo material it’s the second instrumental collection of his last three releases, with this brand new effort and 2018’s piano collection, *Deciduous Heart*, sandwiching the song-based *Today is the Day*, which only came out in July of this year. (He also released the fun *Electro Jam* EP with Bob Enns in April, and both produced and contributed heavily to Abby Grace’s *Wanna Change the World* album, issued by The Hermit’s Music in June, so 2020 has already been a prolific year for Paul.)

Since hearing a track from Paul’s collaboration with the Native American flute player Terry Mack (as Wind Weaver) in the soundtrack of Paul Manly’s wonderful *Voices of the River* documentary, I’ve spoken to him about the notion of exploring possibilities within the realm of movie scoring and soundtrack placement for his wordless material, as he has an uncanny knack of writing cinematic, contemplative instrumental music to suit - so it’s rewarding to see and hear him currently leaning towards, and perhaps considering, that direction with such as this reflective mini-album.

Let’s not forget that this is territory Paul has wandered in as far back as 2012, with his *Out of the Blue* album, so it’s not a totally new groove, but certainly a progression considering his increasing skill up and down a fretboard. As with much of Paul’s music, like the man himself it’s gentle and sweet, but with real depth and soul, especially as exhibited in the closing track (of seven), *Night Sky*, during which one cannot help but gaze wistfully at the sleeve image of a full moon, it’s orange glow shimmering on the ocean beneath. Elsewhere, the common Bezooyen themes of nature and the elements are represented in titles such as *Birches in Fall*, *Winter to Spring*, and *Sky Blue*, each sonically visualized in the most thoughtful, calming melodies.

So, who reading has a film project on the go and needs a subtly cinematic, anodyne soundtrack to enhance the visuals? You could do a lot worse than give Paul Bezooyen a call.