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Jesse Cook – The Blue Guitar Sessions

Nov. 7, 2012

To be sure, one should not confuse the title of the new release from Nuevo Flamenco guitar great **Jesse Cook**, *The Blue Guitar Sessions*, with the 12-bar blues that may



come to mind. This is not *The Blues Guitar Sessions*. Rather, it is a very different, very well-produced and well-performed project full of soft, sweet melodies and moods.

Oh, there are clear nods to the blues. A good example would be the opening track, sung by a breathy Emma Lee, the classic Screamin' Jay Hawkins' "I Put a Spell on You" and, later in the album, a sublime and beautiful jazz/blues arrangement called "Miles Shorter."

However, following that is a great group of tunes designed to place you in that romantic space that disregards any part of the world that falls outside of melody, exoticism, and romance. Helping with that escort into that world are the celestial strings that make their presence so well felt.

Now, there are instances where the tempo is picked up, as on "Witching Hour," which has an interesting feel to it with its somewhat hybrid gypsy/reggae feel. This is one of those tracks that's certainly not one easy to pigeonhole, much to Cook's delight, I'll bet. The stirring "Ocean Blue" is another stirring upbeat World track with an identity all its own.

Mind you, all of the tracks on the album still feature the licks and familiar Latin guitar fingering style of Cook embedded somewhere in each tune.

Cook has traveled much, seen much, and experienced much. Because of this all-encompassing experience, it is no wonder that he can simply let go with his imagination and envision then paint such a diverse project. Tunes like the melancholy "Toybox," the sweet "Ne Me Quitte Pas," and the telling "The Road" probably do the best job of describing the album's title and mood as they conjure up "blue" as effectively as any piece on the album.

Wherever Cook tends to "go" with his projects, he always returns with an assortment of fine tunes and a noteworthy production that displays how seriously he regards his art while still having fun with its many facets. – *Ronald Jackson*



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