

Music with A Lot of Pluck

by Joseph Pehrson ©2009

Guitar Music of Gene PRITSKER performed by guitarist Greg Baker: Scars, Wounds and Lacerations. Available at www.gregbaker-guitar.com.

Gene Pritsker is an expert guitarist, so it should be no surprise that he is very capable of writing for his native instrument. Greg Baker has come out with a compendium of the complete solo Pritsker acoustic and electric guitar music to date, and he does a fine job of

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navigating the intricacies of Pritsker's work.

I found it particularly striking that the album started out quietly with acoustic guitar and, in fact, a piece based upon classical models, the work of Joaquin Rodrigo. This was the first of a set of four pieces, the eponym of the CD title: Scars, Wounds and Lacerations (with "Snow" the 4th piece to, as stated, "numb the effect"). I enjoyed "Scars," and also "Wounds" with its insistent melody, but if I had to choose my injury, I would probably go with the piece "Lacerations" which, based upon Brazilian guitar styles, had an exceptional harmonic and melodic variety.

A shift to electric guitar, then, made a strong contrast to what was, in my view, the most accomplished piece on this album, Pritsker's Quaaludes and Fugues. The humorous title aside, these really are preludes and fugues for solo electric guitar. The three preludes are especially striking and, indeed, do have a quasi drug-induced quality, since Pritsker uses the

plished, and varied work for electric guitar. So far, I have encountered nothing like it for this instrument.

Another favorite work is a piece for four classical acoustic guitars, Two Dances from Satan's Great Ball, which was performed on the Composers Concordance concert of February 13, 2006. Since there is obviously only one real Greg Baker, this piece was skillfully overdubbed. I find the two dances, particularly the first, to be lively and full of harmonic change and fun. The title is taken from the novel *The Master and Margarita* by Mikhail Bulgakov. There are obvious Brazilian influences and tuneful development as well as an emphasis on the guitar's percussive qualities. I

also hear some nice imitative treatment of the material, especially in the first piece.

The CD also contains an extended Requiem for solo electric guitar and pre-recorded electronics based upon the September 11th tragedy, a nice short solo classical guitar piece



Greg Baker

"...Well-armed and effective in unknown territory"

special pedal effects of the electric guitar. In my opinion, it is these effects which make the electric guitar so versatile and one of the preeminent electric instruments of our time: Quaalude #1 uses phaser effects, Quaalude #2 uses a chorus effect and Quaalude #3 a delay effect to create various unbalanced and unsettling dream states. These are entirely within the nature of the concept of the classical prelude.

Fugues #1 and #3 are, essentially, three-voice fugues, which must take some dexterity on the part of the guitarist but are played here effortlessly by Greg Baker. The second fugue is actually a canon, with the second guitar voice imitating one beat later. Fugues 1 and 2 use an "overdrive" effect on the guitar to produce a distortion, very appropriate to the intellectually forceful nature of the fugal form, but the very final Fugue #3 has the electric guitar in its native mode, with no effects whatsoever. This piece is an incredibly imaginative, accom-



Gene Pritsker