

Ricardo's CD, Madera Sonora

– A review by Adam Solomon

“Ricardo is a DC-based guitarist, and the rare American flamenco who can fool you into thinking he’s another gypsy from Jerez. Madera Sonora is an album in the vein of the very best of modern flamenco guitar, a direct heir to top-five and all-around genius guitarist Gerardo Núñez (who I’ve now switched to listening to, without any decline in musical quality). Ricardo offers us three stunning pieces in the universally-loved flamenco style of bulería, a haunting tangos in the unusual key of D, the aforementioned larger-than-life tanguillo (which begins in my personal favorite flamenco style, granaína, with a lovely trémolo section), and the rest (for completeness, a rondeña, a soleá por bulerías, a straight-up soleá, an alegrías, and a rumba).

The music is all that’s great about the modern school of flamenco exemplified by Núñez (as opposed to, say, Tomatito or Vicente Amigo). The compositions are original, making use of experimentation in new tunings and keys (with lovely result), the rhythms are played around with, with the utmost brilliance and feeling involved, and the music just sounds nice. The tanguillos doesn’t sound (at least to me) nearly as complex as a lot of modern flamenco guitar but the aire, or the musicality, the feeling, of it, the simple pounding of the rhythm or the haunting airs of the trémolo in the granaína intro, are unforgettable.

Since my guess is that most readers of this blog haven’t the slightest clue of flamenco, I’m going to go out on a limb and say that Ricardo’s album is a fantastic introduction, even for an album not from one of the Spanish legends like Paco or Tomatito or Sabicas. It’s beautiful music, easily accesible (though the addiction certainly helps you see some of what’s great it in), and all this modern jazz aside, it’s really just down-and-dirty flamenco.”

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