

Ciro Hurtado

Luna



My grandmother used to always say I was in the moon. It meant that I was thinking far away thoughts. Little boys think of rockets and sailboats and forests paths among other things. So it made perfect sense to me to listen to **Ciro Hurtado**'s latest album called **Luna**. Master Guitarist Ciro Hurtado is a storyteller of the finest kind. He is one of those guitarists that throws his soul into every song, wringing out the finer nuances of warmth, of heart, and the boundless spirit of adventure. Luna is nine tracks of South American infused World music with enough guitars and orchestra to make the compositions harmonically-rich, light, and lyrical. This is musical poetry that permits us to escape from the burden of the pandemic and allows us some much needed respite.

What sounds like a parlor guitar begins the song **Camino**. The odd sounding instrument Ciro uses is actually a *ronroco*, a small, ten stringed guitar with a medium pitch. The song is the perfect beginning for the adventure in which we are about to partake. The music is carefree, warm, and inviting. It's friendly and it says "Come along with me." How can we refuse?

The title tune, **Luna**, has a lot of different tones, from Andean forms to even a little jazz. A mellow South American flute called a quena and a pan flute or a zampoña by **Cindy Harding**, Ciro's mirthful guitar, and **Julio Ledezma**'s small drum called a bombo combine into an unforgettable scenario of a bright, silver circle in the night sky, punctuated by jealous stars, and the heartbeat of true love. It is the highlight of the album and a quick favorite.

Love in the Pandemic or **Amor en Pandemia** is a sincere, orchestral offering of sorrow versus hope. Hurtado's infuses his opening with a great deal of sadness as his music describes the crushing pain of the virus, not being able to catch one's breath, and the damage it does to body and soul. The orchestra's patient reply is the salve, the balm of healing under horrific conditions. This one is a vocal with the expressive voice of **Milena Salamanca**. The lyrics are heart wrenching.

"Días sentado sin respirar, anhelo el aire del arrozal. Grano dorado surcando va como estrella fugaz."

"Days that I sit without breathing, I miss the air of the rice fields. The golden grains furrowing like a fugitive star."

It's sort of eponymous. The tune **Andean Celtic** is what it is. Intricate fretwork, peppery percussion, and whimsical flutes combine into a tune that brings two worlds together as one. The forests and fens of Ireland meet the pampas and mountains of the Andes region and they make fine friends.

It is the dawn or **Amanecer**. Harding's delicate flute and Ciro's lush fretwork, backed by the Venezuelan Strings Recording Ensemble, shifts into an epic Peruvian production that could preface any old world adventure. Gold and purple skies make way for bluer heavens and the earth awakens. Your mountain quest brings you so high, you can touch the sky. The music conveys what we need the most, hope. This was another favorite on Luna.

With a surprising contribution on electric guitar, **Taruka** tells of the mule deer that are found in East Central South America. Ciro sees them when he takes his walks and the agility and precision of these remarkable creatures are reflected in Ciro's work. Every deer is a free spirit, an inspiration.

Del Norte Soy is a busy, animated vocal of unusual complexities. It is the little hummingbird that hovers at the window, sips at a flower, and with a tiny chirp says I am me. I am colorful. See me. The chirp translates as *I Am from the North*. A wonderful finish for the album.

The album has a lot of mixed emotion, but it distills down to one of hopefulness. These inspirational songs, these *ensueños musicales*, are just what we need to remember that tomorrow will be a better day. Deep inside I am still that little boy, that boy in the moon and this music brought out the yearning for adventure and the wandering soul that is in all of us. I truly enjoyed every cut. Highly Recommended.

- R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews