

Randal L Meek

## Longings



**Randal L Meek** promised himself that he would live his dream. Sometimes the wait is quite long, but if you stick to it, and never forget what you promised yourself, it comes along. All fate asks you to do is snatch it up and do something with it. Randal did. Taking up fingerstyle guitar, composing worthwhile music, and submitting the album to a world class authority takes courage. Here is the outcome. The album is called **Longings**. It is a baker's dozen of contemporary guitar songs with just a touch of the Hawaiian Islands to make it interesting. Actually, it is more than interesting. Let's talk sublime. Meek has a laid back style that literally floats your boat. And whether it is made out of koa wood or daydreams, the results are the same. Music that relaxes, refreshes, and restores the spirit. You don't even need to be in the middle of the Pacific for it to work its magic. The album was produced by Will Ackerman and engineered and produced by Tom Eaton.

You have to go to the southwest side of Maui, but there you can find Makena right off South Kihei Road. Among the black lava rocks and warm sands, you can throw down your mat, kick off your rubba slippas, and gaze out at the crescent moon of Molokini and the ocean mesa of Kahoolawe Island. It is a place of great peace. Meek's opening tune **Waves of Makena**, invites you to gather together in at this special place. Even the name Makena means "the gathered" in Hawaiian. I wanted to be there.

**Goodbye**, which seemed so out of place as the second track on the album, kicks it as a song of sweet sorrow. Watching someone walk away has a profound effect on your mind, but listening to echoing notes that fade away only reminds us that it is too real. That touches the soul. Randal's collaboration with violinist Charlie Bisharat not only tugs at the heartstrings, it tears them asunder. It is a beautiful tune.

**Spirit Rising** lives up to its name. A very gentle tune, it seems to drift along and then from out of nowhere, coalesces into this transcendent melody. Ackerman and Eaton are both on this cut and, to me, the overall sense is a spirit in ascension. Lighter than light. More pure than thought.

And segue into the tune **Desert Cathedrals**. Meek hits incredible heights on my favorite on the album. This is another Bisharat duo and it is resplendent with the heat of star light from above and the residual warmth of the earth below. It's one of those "I can see the Milky Way" from here moments that are quite rare. The music is divine as if your soul can touch the very edge of the universe. Quite the inspirational tune.

From first note to last, the title tune **Longings**, even with its itinerant silences, is a soft, emotionally filled, melancholic tune. Somewhere in the past, Meek lost a piece of his soul and the search is difficult when there are so many tears in your eyes. If you have ever yearned for someone, for something, then instinctually, you know this music. It is only now that you've heard it. Kudos to Eugene Friesen and his cello for adding a remarkable gravitas to this song.

**Liliko'i** is aptly named. There is something about this island wide volunteer visitor that catches the eye and the spirit. Like Randal's tune, the purple flower is complex. The fruit is tangy and maintains its flowery aroma. The solo guitar song has a bit of tartness to it, but the melody clings like that vine right onto your heart.

I know that Randal L Meek has a pair of previous releases and I certainly want to explore them. Longings, however has a thoughtful beauty to it that surprised me. Part of his formula may be his environment. Living on Maui has a certain kind of spiritual inspiration all its own. However, no one can deny his innate talent. Highly listenable. - R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews