

Russ Hewitt

Chasing Horizons

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Incorporating many modes of guitar including a multitude of Latin styles, jazz and groove, Dallas-based musician **Russ Hewitt** offers up his latest album **Chasing Horizons**. Apparently, the sun never sets on the Nuevo Flamenco guitar. The album is a remarkable four year long project for this notable composer and performer. Hewitt admits that there are at least eight distinctive styles on the recording. Packed with ten dazzling tracks and a horde of talented accompanists, this music is a whirl wind tour of techniques from around the world.

Everybody on board!

The opening track is called **Allende** or *Beyond*. Since the general theme of the album is horizons, Hewitt's message is loud and clear, and quite lively. Allende is an andante moderato tune that follows the sun, whether it be across an ocean or over a desert landscape. The adventure begins.

Chasing Horizons, the title tune has an upbeat texture that feels like we are going through misty Ecuadorean rain forests, across dry Patagonian deserts, and up and over snowy Andean summits to satisfy the adventurer in all of us. Russ's lively guitar sets the pace and we just have to keep up. No one would want miss anything on this fantastic journey.

One of my many favorites on the album is called **Vivir Libre** or *To Live Free*. It is performed in the *Montuno* style. Yeah, I had to look it up. Saddled in the Afro-Cuban section of Latin jazz, it is a style of highly active, sometimes improvised music, but wait. It is usually associated with the piano. Hewitt's masterful fret work on **Vivir Libre** makes this rousing piece stand out for its catchy beat and complex melody. You can't play this at 4 AM. Or can you?

The beautiful and somewhat sad song **Amor Perdido** or *Lost Love* is next. This one has the dynamic Bucharest All-Star Orchestra for accompaniment and it turns this love song into an instrumental ballad reminiscent of a Portuguese fado. There is a part in this musical narrative where luck and love soon part ways. Hewitt's guitar style is sinuous and full of passion.

Sunset Samba has an organic energy to it as if all was in motion, whether it be clouds crawling across in the sky or swaying hips on the dance floor in the cantina. Cool Brazilian rhythms warm the night as the stars put on their own show.

Another song where Russ shows his amazing guitar talent is called **Luna**. This one is caught somewhere between contemporary jazz and post classical with moderate Spanish influences throughout. Using Dorian Mode #4 with minor scales, Russ creates an ultra-passionate ballad so romantically infused that these two lovers create their own kind of moon light.

Return to Simitai has a Vietnamese zither adding spice to open the adventure story. It starts in the Yan Mountains of China. Simitai is one of the most fabulous sections of the Great Wall and it is easy to understand why Russ would want to return. Some great back up bass in this one and of course, that zither against Russ's guitar makes for strange, but delightful traveling companions.

Other tracks include **Cubalia Café, Luminous, and Serein**. On the first listen to this album, I equated Hewitt's work with that of Johannes Linstead and Ottmar Liebert, but I was in error. It is different and more. After listening to every song repeatedly, I can attest that Russ Hewitt is a complete master over the multi-fusion technique of the Spanish guitar. Every tune is entertaining and gets the blood heated, the passion stirred, and the heartbeat racing. The album also acts as sort of a primer for those of us unfamiliar with the many different exciting Latin styles out there. Every one a treat. Highly listenable. - R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews