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"A sinister cabal of superior writers."

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Author: Phillip Barnett — Published: Jun 19, 2012 at 2:50 pm

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"Fire in O'Doodlee's Popcorn Factory" seems to be his signature piece – I have no idea where he gets the title. Played on 12-string guitar, the song starts and ends with a catchy harmonic run. In the middle is a frantically paced combination of strumpicked folk-style run.

The title of "Young Goodman Brown Joined the Confederacy Today" is taken from a famous Nathaniel Hawthorne short story. It begins with a simple theme anchored by arpeggios done in three-quarters time, which segues into a complicated up-tempo section reminiscent of Leo Kottke (who Engelhardt lists as one of his mentors).

Engelhardt also uses a 12-string on the Jimi Hendrix song "Third Stone from the Sun." He uses lightning fast strumming and picking to substitute for the Hendrix psychedelic electronic effects. There may be a bit of an inside joke in the song selection, since the lyrics from Hendrix's version includes the lines: "[A]nd you'll never hear surf music again."

Engelhardt switches to Piedmont-style picking on electric guitar on "Beavers in a Hot Tub" – an electric guitar arrangement of the *Leave It to Beaver* theme song – and "Pressed Hams."

Both in his titles and in his playing, Engelhardt shows a wry sense of humor (which you'd better have if you're going to spend a lot of time playing this kind of music). He avoids the major sin of many pickers – he doesn't dwell on a particular theme too long, making sure to switch tempos and styles frequently enough to maintain the listener's interest.

So I heartily recommend buying this CD. Toulouse Engelhardt demonstrates dazzling technique and range that speaks clearly to the possibilities inherent in solo guitar. He does so in an intriguing way that doesn't seem preachy or self-important.

And both my hands agree with me.

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Phillip Barnett is a middle-aged software geek with multiple and conflicting musical fantasies. He has played jazz piano, folk guitar and klezmer clarinet (though not all at the same time). You can follow his meanderings through twitter.

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


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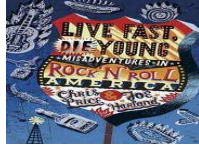
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