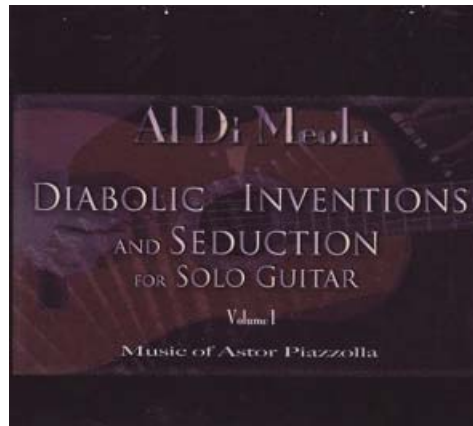




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Al Di Meola - Diabolic Inventions and Seduction for Solo Guitar, Vol. 1: Music of Astor Piazzolla



By Gary Hill

Overall Review

In my opinion Al Di Meola is one of the greatest guitarists of all time. He may not have the name recognition of Carlos Santana or Eric Clapton, at least in terms of the general music audience, but he's at least as good at his trade as either one of those guys. In fact, I'd put him in the top five or six out there. This disc is a collection of Di Meola playing an acoustic guitar with just percussion for accompaniment. This motif allows Di Meola's skills as an emotional, yet technical player really shine through. While something with this limited a scope could have a tendency towards feeling "samey," Di Meola's mastery of pulling emotion and power from the strings keeps it from falling into this trap. This is highly recommended for those who have followed Di Meola's work, and for fans of great guitar in general. You just don't get a lot better when it comes to guitar playing than Al Di Meola.

Track by Track Review

Campero: Arranged for solo acoustic guitar accompanied just by percussion, this is an incredibly powerful piece of music. Di Meola's trademark stylings are in place and it's amazing how much emotion can be conveyed by just the instrumentation in a classically inspired, jazz arrangement.

Poema Valseado: The general motif isn't altered here, but this is definitely a different piece of music. It's perhaps a bit more intricate and Latin in texture. I'd also have to say that it's not quite as strong as the opener. It's still pretty and evocative, but just not up to the high bar set by that one.

Tangata Del Alba: This one has a faster pace although the motif is not altered from the previous couple numbers. It's a more energetic journey that has a bit more adventurous pattern. In some ways this one covers more musical territory than the two that preceded it. It's a highlight of the disc.

Adios Nonino: With an even more traditional texture, this is both the most Latin thing we've heard so far and the most pure jazz (versus jazz tinged with classical). I like this one a lot and would consider amongst the best pieces on show here. He turns this incredibly emotional and powerful at times.

Tema De Maria: Here Di Meola foregoes the percussion accompaniment and carries the piece with just his guitar. The moods and melodies that emerge from his strings call to mind flamenco music at times, but classical sounds at others. Those tones are always emotional and awe-inspiring. The faster paced section in particular is amazing.

Milonga Del Angel: The percussion returns on this one and it's another great piece of music. This time we get quite a bit of Latin flare. It's quite effective and Di Meola really spins some awesome melodies.

Romantico: This one has more of a lounge jazz feel to it. You can really feel the smoky club air and see the little table in front of you. It's a great change of pace and quite different from a lot of the other music, while still sharing musical ground with the rest of the CD.

Milonga Carriaguera: Here we get another track without percussion. Di Meola sways, flies and in general coaxes emotion with every note he pulls from the strings. It's another extremely powerful acoustic guitar showcase and a great ending to a potent CD.



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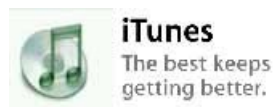
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