

KEN NAVARRO - THE MEETING PLACE

Ken Navarro began his career as a solo guitarist in 1990 with the album *The River Flows* which he published on his own label, Positive Music Records. His very second album, *After Dark*, was nominated for a Grammy. As an independent, Ken has since created a numerous albums and confirmed his position as one of the most outstanding contemporary jazz guitarists of his time. Critically acclaimed, Ken, through his music, has conquered the hearts of many music lovers world-wide. Each of his albums is a masterpiece and has brought him admiration for the intricacy he has produced in his own Positive Music studios.

The Meeting Place is Ken's 15th album on Positive Music Records. After publishing two CDs on the Shanachie label, he recorded *Love Coloured Soul* (2004) which again appeared on the Positive Music label. Faced with the choice between money and passion, Ken chose passion. He followed his vision and it is reflected in his music yet again. Those who are interested in the career/development of his projects should visit Ken's website on which he reports in detail on the production of his newest project.

On whom does a musician rely other than his well-developed musical team? Ken Navarro leans on and trusts his music to the band which accompanies him on his tours: key boardist Jay Rowe, saxophonist Rob Holmes, bassist Gary Grainger, Andre "Blues" Webb at the drums, and percussionist Kevin Prince.

The album begins with an upbeat composition *Lucky*. Peppered with intricate percussion rhythms, Ken Navarro is brilliant not only on the acoustic and electrical guitars, but also on the mandolin. The sun of California itself gleams in Ken's guitar on the introduction to *Did You Hear That?* His tender acoustic sound contrasts with his furious electric guitar creating a musical dichotomy. The combination appeals to listeners.

No guitar album is complete without a breath Spain. *I Wish I Knew* showcases Ken Navarro's Flamenco flair on his acoustic guitar. This song is performed in perfect harmony with Rob Holmes flattering soprano saxophone. *No Other Way* is an epic story full of drama told by the guitar virtuoso and Jay Rowe on the synthesizer. In the lively *My Beautiful Girls*, Ken's joyful guitar soars in this jubilant song. It is uplifting.

The Meeting Place is a Navarro melody, the theme of which recreates itself again and again, and without becoming lost, increases in tempo. A Pat Metheny cover is always a challenge which Ken Navarro bravely masters. *Lakes* lies in the frontier between melody and improvisation where the transitions are flowing and smooth. The instrumental *Language of Peace* displays Ken's musical interpretation against the backdrop of accompaniment by Jay and Rob. *Just Like That* shows Navarro's complex and slick guitar technique, calling to mind Nikolai Andrejewitsch Rimski Korsakow's Hummelflug.

Ken's album also has messages. Such is the romantic *Language of Peace*, which offers itself for the tender hearted. *That Time of Evening* mixes melodic lines of funk into its theme. And it is well known that the spice lies in the shortness. *The Challenge* proves to us that Ken Navarro can sustain excitement in a longer composition as well.

Musical professionalism and emotion are not contradictory. For those who feel Ken's message, this album is to be enjoyed. Thus, **The Meeting Place** offers unusual melodies and complex virtuosity. It is a fantastic combination that will be appealing when listened to again and again.

Reviewed April 2007 by Hans Huelsmann for Smooth Jazz Daily