

REZENSION IN Minor 7th USA

In the autumn of 2009, I was very fortunate to be among an enraptured audience attending Peter Finger's fêted "Open Strings Guitar Festival" in Osnabrück, Germany. Although headed by such stellar talent as Clive Carroll, Muriel Anderson and Franco Morone, the German acoustic guitar duo "Hands on Strings" easily outshone every other performer there, hands down. Thomas Fellow and Stephan Bormann are individually incredible players, but the telepathy and synergy they've found as a duo energizes their work to an exponential degree. A fusion of jazz and classical, their music is a sonic personification of the crosspollination of the two players' strengths, especially Fellow on classical nylon-string and Bormann on acoustic and electric jazz guitar. Although acoustic jazz guitar duos such as Larry Coryell & Philip Catherine, Biréli Lagrène & Sylvain Luc, and Ralph Towner & John Abercrombie long ago set the bar high in this arena, Hands on Strings with their new release "Loco" have set it a little higher -- into the stratosphere. "Chewbacca" is a spirited anthem which seems to pay unapologetic homage to freedom and joy... contagiously uplifting via expert control over dynamics, insistent rhythms, modulations and melody. "Galileo" shows off another forté of this duo: total facility with unusual meters, nearly tribal, always riveting. There are shades of Ralph Towners' landmark recording "Solstice" on "Moondog," where Bormann coaxes his 12-string on a near-spiritual odyssey. The CD is a compilation of ten original compositions by Fellow and Bormann, with two exceptions. The duo engages in a playful repartee with Egberto Gismonti's "Karate." On Keith Jarrett's "Memories of Tomorrow" (also known as Part II C of "The Köln Concert") they mine musical gold. By staying true to Jarrett's emphasis on unadorned but nuanced melody initially, the tune is elegant in its simplicity. In the last seconds, however, Fellow caps it off with a mesmerizing and lightning-fast solo recapitulation of the theme which will truly astonish you. Although a CD copy of "Loco" may be difficult to find in North America, it will be worth your while to hunt this one down from a European source. © Alan Fark - minor7th - usa