

*Neshamah (Songs from the Jewish Diaspora) is the first solo recording by American guitarist Tim Sparks on the Tzadik Records label. "Neshamah" means "soul" in Hebrew. The arrangements adapt Ashkenazic klezmer, Sephardic and Middle Eastern Jewish music for the solo guitar.*

*Sparks had sent a copy of his earlier CD Guitar Bazaar to avant-garde composer, record producer, and multi-instrumentalist John Zorn who liked the Bartok "Rumanian Dances" arrangements on that CD. Sparks had previously played a lot of Jewish music with various Jewish musicians and became adept in the Klezmer style. Zorn suggested the solo guitar adaptations of traditional Jewish songs. Sparks blended the songs with his background in jazz, Latin American, Balkan and American roots music.*

*In his Allmusic Guide review, music critic Steven Lowey praised Neshamah writing "Sometimes the guitar transforms a piece into something different than it was originally... [Sparks] squeezes every ounce of melodic sophistication from a song's essence, resulting in a delightful and authentic display that while impressive is never overdone." [2] In his review for Dirty Linen magazine, Jim Lee wrote "A truly groundbreaking project and one that also makes for refreshing listening. I'd recommend both to any fan of good music, be it guitar or otherwise." [3] Critic Aaron Howard also praised the album, "The result is brilliant on many levels. Musically, Sparks is one of the better guitarists in the country, a musician's musician even if he remains largely unknown to a large audience. Think of Bill Frisell, Leo Kottke or Adrian Legg and that's the level that Sparks plays on."*