

Sidewalk Blues

Recorded over the last several years in various locations, Tim Sparks's "Sidewalk Blues" is a fingerpicking homage to early 20th Century American Roots music. Sparks is a guitarist's guitarist, an innovator and student of many styles of music. Among those styles are American roots music, European and Mediterranean folk music, and classical. "Sidewalk Blues" is a return to Sparks's own roots and the music that initially inspired him. A meticulous arranger and consummate performer, Sparks plows, punctuates, and pulses his way through a well-chosen batch of ragtime, jazz, country blues, and gospel with an individual flair and spirit to burn. One of the nice things about the album is the lack of aural homogeneity. The guitars often sound very different on different tracks, almost as if you're listening to a compilation of incredible guitarists. No doubt this is due to the nature of the way the album was recorded, as mentioned above, but Sparks also utilizes a variety of guitars on the album. About half the tracks were cut on a Podium Custom Collings OM style Country Cutaway. Several tracks were recorded on a 1917 Gibson L-3. Also played were a Hoffman Custom OM Style Cutaway and a Lakewood Custom Concert Cutaway. Simply stated, Sparks is a master of the instrument. His arrangements and performances of Louis Armstrong, Fats Waller, Jelly Roll Morton, and Bix Beiderbecke compositions are flawless, at times playful, and always soulful. As stated in the liner notes, these seventeen tracks evoke the sounds, sights, and smells of "New Orleans sportin' houses, Harlem speakeasies... and a world of tobacco fields, fire-breathing itinerant preachers, moonshine on Saturday night, and rapturous Gospel singing on Sunday morning." A must have for fans of Tim Sparks and for anyone who loves fingerstyle guitar playing.