

Music News

MUSIC AND ENTERTAINMENT REVIEW

"You can call it *Jazz-Plus*"

Ric Flauding's newest, *The Journey Collection*

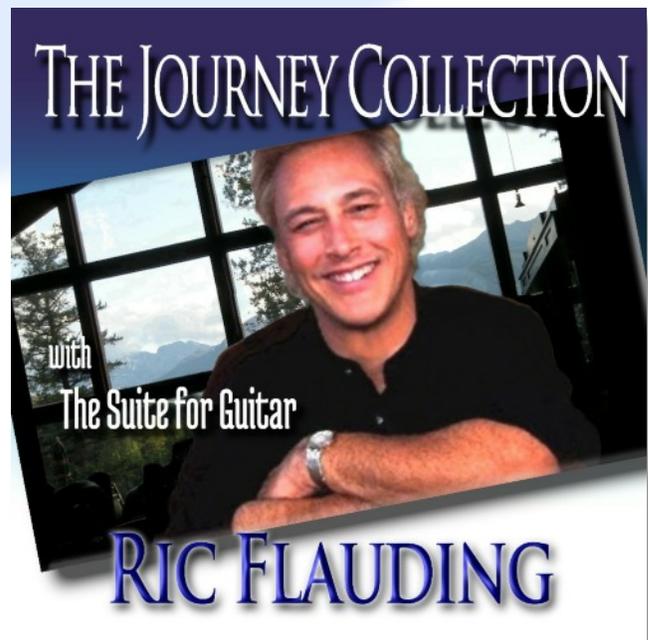
Since the release of his first album, Ric Flauding has been known as one of the most versatile guitar virtuosos in the jazz and pop recording arena. As a composer, arranger, and session artist, he worked with some of the biggest names in the business.

His twelve albums cover a lot of territory as well, from new age, worldbeat, and flamenco to smooth and contemporary jazz albums like *Caleo*, *Jazz Passages*, and *Soundscape: South California*, to a popular Christmas album and a pair of sacred music collections.

Now, with the release of his newest album, he has opened up another spectrum of contemporary jazz. Several of the numbers on the album released in February 2017, including songs like "Mercy" and "Forgiven," take us back to his early works. But now, brilliantly remastered and surrounded by newer pieces like "Moonlit," "A New Hope" and a dynamic trio of Latin style compositions identified as "The Suite for Guitar," Ric Flauding's musical horizons have expanded once again.

To be specific, this is not your daddy's jazz collection. There are no simplistic melodies, no bouncy tunes hinged to endless percussion loops, and no breezy ballads. As the album's liner notes point out, *The Journey Collection* includes Latin, orchestral, and rock riffs, "constantly challenging the imagination and pushing musical boundaries in new and exciting ways."

Perhaps most appealing is the pacing and variety of the tracks included in this collection. The first song, "Mercy," opens in a meditative and reflective mood that gains strength as the dialogue between guitar, sax, and percussion intensifies. The album's most cinematic piece, "Moonlit," adds a sense of drama that is elevated to a deeper and even more compelling degree in the song, "Forgiven," which is as solid a jazz piece as you will ever hear.



With each of the songs that follow, "West on Sunset," "For Dave Mustaine" (a tribute to Ric's friend and lead guitarist of the band Megadeth), "Soft and Gentle," and "A New Hope," the guitar is king, but with a completely different mood and purpose in each.

Next we have the pieces identified as "The Suite for Guitar," featuring three Latin-themed numbers, "Brasilia," "Camino de Santiago," and "Texas," written and arranged by Flauding over a fifteen year period and combined here for the first time. If there was ever any question about the range and versatility of the artist's musical gifts, this album ought to settle the matter once and for all.

As a final note, this is one album you'll want to listen to all the way through, because it is truly a fascinating journey. The collection offers not only a snapshot of Ric Flauding's personal journey as an artist and composer, but takes us on an amazing and thoroughly enjoyable musical adventure.