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Daniel Bernard Roumain Woodbox, Beats & Balladry Thirsty Ear

By Lyn Horton

Daniel Bernard Roumain's six-string violin is the hub for his inventive explorations. His second release on Thirsty Ear, *Woodbox, Beats & Balladry*, gives him the opportunity to show off, and show off he does.



Noteworthy in this recording is that the wizardry that penetrates the synth programming, electronics and turntablisms never detracts from the single line beauty of the violin, the acoustic piano or the trumpet. In fact, the smack on the drums and cymbals that introduces "Spaceships Over Haiti" on the first track opens the door for the violinist to soar on his instrument and sing above the ornamentation and accompaniment to follow. Roumain composed the twelve entries on the recording.

His compositions demonstrate a diversity of intention. His unique ability to orchestrate from a veritable infinity of choices that are associated with the non-traditional, though inherently cultural, aspects of the music is stunning. How his violin interacts with the sounds can become indistinguishable within the stream, as in "Sonata for Violin and Turntables, Part 2" or obviously contrapuntal in "Part 1" of the same piece. The violin's changing tonality expresses true emotional content; "JMDL" unfolds elegantly as the violin delineates a ballad over simple repetitions from the piano and a quiet rhythmic backdrop from the drums. The melody does not stop. Roumain consistently leads the listener through a jungle of changing paths; he strokes out phrases which can evolve into tunes, in expanded reverberant form, the quintessence of which is exhibited in his solo, "The Loss."

The surprise fanfare of the trumpet in "Slowly Fooled" introduces Roumain's pizzicato interplay with extraordinary re-dubbing of the trumpet within the synth programming that culminates in Roumain's high-pitched bowing brilliance. "Our Country" reverently closes the record in a dilated, revived version of "My Country 'Tis of Thee."