

## Pedro Soler & Gaspar Claus “Barlande”

**infiné**

US

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### PEDRO SOLER & GASPAR CLAUS: Barlande (InFiné)

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**PEDRO SOLER & GASPAR CLAUS**

**Barlande**

**IF1015**

**InFiné 2011**

**08 Tracks. 45mins40secs**

Amazon UK: CD US: CD

*Barlande* is an extraordinary record on many levels, but one of its most fascinating aspects is that it is the meeting of a father, one of the most revered flamenco guitarists alive today, and his son, a cellist who has for most of his career favoured experimenting with other musicians rather than following a formal classical path. The project came out of the first InFiné Summer Workshop, a week-long residency curated by the label in a disused quarry near Poitiers, France, during which a host of artists, from the label as well as guests, are invited to create music on site and perform live each evening, and is released just on time to coincide with this year's edition.

The flamenco guitar and cello are both very dramatic instruments, the former usually being played in a mixture of extremely flamboyant and delicate styles, while the sombre, earthy tones of the latter often conjure a deep sense of melancholy. Here, father and son create a wonderful soundtrack, rich in emotions and contrasts. In turn answering each other or building up toward a common ground, the pair weave intricate motifs into stunning melodies, and use their instruments as much in their musical capacities as for textural effect. The sound of a lightly brushed guitar string, of a hand on polished wood or of a bow sliding on strings can take as much importance in their tracks as chords or melodies, adding to the organic nature of the music.

While the work began in France, the album was recorded in Brooklyn, where the father and son soon ditched the early demos they had brought with them to focus on improvisations. The eight pieces presented here are all equally exquisite. At times, the restraint is such that it seems that the slightest distraction could throw the whole thing off path, as on *Caminos* for instance, where Soler and Claus establish such a fine balance between melancholy and melodrama, their interplay so tight as tension slowly builds up. *Caballitos De Mar (Alegria)* also displays some extremely refined moments half way through as the pair retreat from the more flamboyant first and last sections to reveal a more peaceful and contemplative performance, while, on *Sueños Indecisos*, Soler build up an extremely subtle motif over strident distortions, deep hums and wood rubs on the cello.

Elsewhere though, they opt for more sobering moods as the sombre tone of the cello draws autumnal undertones, echoed by the guitar played in the lower register. On the title track, this cohesive approach is gripping, with circling motifs continuously ebbing and flowing, contributing greatly to the poignancy of the piece. Later on, *Rostro Descolorido (Saeta)* reaches an entirely different level of minimalism, and here, it is Claus who contributes the bulk of the melodic part of the piece while Soler controls the pace with dry strums.

On concluding piece *Encuentro En Brooklyn (Minera)*, the pair are joined by long term friend and guitarist with The National Bryce Dessner on electric guitar and Sufjan Stevens on harmonium. Following on from the desolate *Rostro Descolorido*, there is a feeling of opulence here, the harmonium especially bringing fresh tones to this record. As harmonium and cello combine to provide a backdrop for Soler, Dessner adds extremely brief and discreet sparkling touches to the piece.

The intricacies of the music and the complexity of the performance doesn't at any point undermine the emotional scope of this record. There is an impressive level of cohesion between Pedro Soler and Gaspar Claus which goes beyond their affiliation. While *Barlande* is the meeting of a father and his son, it is above all the meeting of two musicians with very different outlooks who meet on a level beyond their respective work.

4.8/5