

PEDRO SOLER & GASPAR CLAUS

“*Barlande*”

infiné

US

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Pedro Soler and Gaspar Claus

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It's a shame that *jamming* has taken on a pejorative cast—a slackening of coherence and, possibly, regard for one's audience—because the term can be useful. Sometimes, as in the case of Pedro Soler and Gaspar Claus, the connotation of back-porch casualness can be a compliment. This father-son guitar-cello duo's style (call it free-form flamenco) comes across as the most intimate sort of jam, an exchange that seems both fleeting and profound.

The duo isn't just the result of a son following in Dad's footsteps. Born in France in 1938, Soler learned flamenco guitar from Spaniards exiled to Toulouse after Franco's takeover. He excelled at the style and made his name accompanying master singers such as Jacinto Almadén. His son opted for cello and a conservatory education but eventually succumbed to burnout. When Claus picked up the instrument again after a five-year break, he had a different agenda, exemplified by his 2009 performances with hard-line Japanese experimentalists



like Sachiko M. It was only at this point that Claus and Soler began a proper collaboration, cemented on a Bryce Dessner-produced 2011 full-length, *Barlande*.

Some tracks on the mostly improvised record impress with their quiet composure, guitarist and cellist trading lead and supporting roles like seasoned dance partners. Others find Claus playing the agitator, unleashing poison clouds of bow-on-strings feedback. If there's a lesson in these duets, it's that much like father-son relations, a good jam leaves room for the odd quarrel.

—Hank Shteamer