

TOMAS MICHAUD

Imagine music inspired by hiking in a Guatemalan tropical forest in the shadow of a volcano, listening to flamenco while driving on a dusty road through the Spanish countryside, meditating on the past at a 10-story-tall Mayan temple pyramid, looking at moonlight shining on a garden flower in Bali, or boating across a crystalline-blue lake to a primitive village in Colombia. These are some of adventures that have led Latin-styled acoustic-guitarist Tomas Michaud to create seven albums of melodic and rhythmic instrumental music.

Michaud's music has always been a global, cross-cultural journey, but with his latest recording, *Beauty and Fire*, he also wants to take the listener on a deeper, inner exploration. While his original instrumental music combines nouveau-flamenco guitar with exotic world grooves and romantic, enchanting melodies, it also carries an undercurrent of deep feelings and positive life affirmation.

The recordings of Tomas Michaud (pronounced tom'-iss me-show) are available at his website (www.worldmelodies.com), CDbaby and Amazon, as well as at many digital download locations including iTunes, Rhapsody, Napster and eMusic.

Michaud's CDs are compelling world-fusion music containing elements of nouveau-flamenco, new age and smooth jazz, with many percussive rhythms from Latin and South America, plus occasional flavorings from the Mid-East and India as well as tropical touches recalling the Caribbean, the Mediterranean and Indonesia.

There are several reasons guitarist Tomas Michaud named his latest recording *Beauty and Fire*. The title describes melodic yet hot music, love and passion, as well as spiritual fulfillment and inspiration for the soul.

"When I think of the concept of *Beauty and Fire*, there are many levels, many meanings," reflects Michaud. "I have always been fascinated by fire. There is both energy and beauty inside a flame, but it is so fleeting, so ethereal, never still, sort of like music. Fire is common, but miraculous and mysterious. There is a spiritual, ceremonial nature to it - think of early fire offerings and candles in churches. When humans harnessed fire, it completely changed the history of the world. I tried to capture the essence of the fire phenomenon in my music, but I also use fire as a symbol for the warmth and light that burns within our souls."

Tomas lives in Alameda, California, just across the bay from San Francisco, and has traveled widely including Spain, Portugal, Morocco, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Costa Rica, Guatemala, France, Bali and Singapore. He always travels with his guitar, and often is inspired by his surroundings and adventures to compose new music.

During his career, Michaud has been influenced by the melodic rock'n'roll of Santana as well as the nouveau-flamenco of the Gipsy Kings and Ottmar Liebert. In addition, Tomas studied under Jim Bertram, jammed with Brad Gillis (Ozzy Osbourne, Night Ranger) and played joint-concerts and did a Christmas album with Latin-style guitarist Johannes Linstead.

In addition to *Beauty and Fire*, Michaud has a half-dozen other CDs: *Heart Coming Home*, *Passion Dance*, *I Must Be Dreaming*, *In The Presence of Angels*, *New World Flamenco Jazz* and *The Magic of Gayatri*. Michaud, who meditates daily and practices yoga, created the music for *The Magic of Gayatri* which features chanting by his friend Chandra Shakar. The recording is subtitled "A Journey of Healing and Joy with One of the Oldest Prayers Known to Humanity -- The Gayatri Mantra." Michaud also performs concerts regularly.

On *Beauty and Fire*, Michaud gently stretches his sound in new directions by having his nylon-string guitar interact with violin, cello, fretless bass on four tunes, and tabla on one

piece. As on his other solo albums, Tomas co-produced the CD with Don Turney who also adds grand piano and keyboards (he studied under Joe Harnell). As usual, Michaud works with top musicians -- fretless bassist Kai Eckhardt (John McLaughlin, Billy Cobham), bassist David Margen (Santana, Grateful Dead), drummer Thomas Perry (Flametal, Lost Ticket), percussionist Brian Rice (Wake the Dead, Mike Marshall & Choro Famoso), violinist Lila Sklar (Bauhaus, Gypsy Caravan), cellist Michael Knapp (Silvia Nakkach, Paul McCandless) and other special guests.

The music on *Beauty and Fire*, all composed by Michaud, ranges from the very rhythmic "Embrace in the Mist" ("The emotion for that came from putting my arms around a woman on a foggy, misty night near Golden Gate Park") to the gentle guitar-cello duet "Lotus in the Moonlight" ("In Bali I took a late-night walk in a garden"). The soft'n'slow "Morning Grace," featuring interplay between Michaud's guitar and Eckhardt's sliding bass-lines, was written just as the sun came up ("I was meditating on how great it is to have another day and another adventure"). The guitar and violin tightly entwine on tunes such as "Tango In Paradise" ("as if the two instruments are dancing together") and the love song "Two Hearts Into One," both of which also feature Turney on piano. "My Secret Cave" ("which refers to a meditative experience") includes both tabla and flute, while the title tune contains some Mid-Eastern sounds. On "Gypsy Heart" Tomas plays strongly flamenco-esque guitar. "I was thinking about the Gipsy Kings," he remembers. "I first heard their music on a bus in Zamora, Spain, and I immediately connected with it. That moment began my journey of exploration of Latin-styled guitar." The following tune, "Tribute," is a tip of the hat to Ottmar Liebert, who coined the term "nouveau flamenco" and also influenced Michaud when he first began recording.

"I get inspired to compose from traveling, listening to great musicians like Marc Antoine and Peter White, taking walks on the beach, meditating, reading, viewing movies, dreaming and watching people," states Michaud. "I learned to speak Spanish specifically to make traveling more pleasurable, and that is why I have found it very enjoyable to go to Spain, Mexico, Central America and South America. The music and the rhythms that I heard along the way strongly influenced my style."

Before becoming one of the acclaimed new-breed of flamenco and Latin-styled acoustic guitar players, Tomas Michaud was a rock'n'roller. In addition to music, he developed an interest in other countries, cultures and languages. In school at age 10 Tomas started playing trumpet for several years, then began writing and recording tunes on piano at 12, and took mandolin lessons when he was 14. "Rod Stewart's 'Maggie May' was popular then and had a mandolin solo in it, but I soon realized it was not an instrument used very often in rock bands so I switched to electric bass. That also was when I heard the album 'Abraxas' by Santana which got me started practicing on guitar. I feel like I can express subtle things with the guitar that I could not express with any of the other instruments or with words. On my best days the notes just seem to flow from deep inside me without any conscious decision-making process." After playing in several rock bands, Michaud began a spiritual search that led him away from the rock'n'roll lifestyle. "I played guitar regularly at church where I performed many of my own compositions."

Tomas went to California State University at Hayward and got his Liberal Studies Bachelor of Arts Degree with a music option. He took all the music theory and composition classes plus private classical-guitar lessons from Jim Bertram, one of the few college professors then teaching guitar as part of a degree curriculum. At that time Michaud also got a job teaching guitar lessons at a music school which he now owns (Starland Music Center) and which features a system for learning guitar that Michaud developed.

"I want to entertain people with my music, but I also want to go deeper than that and touch them on a spiritual level," explains Michaud. "I want to make the listener feel more grounded, whole and complete; to give their lives an enjoyable, meaningful soundtrack."

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