

Mp3 Vincent Varvel - Pictures & Postcards



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A collection of introspective, guitar driven instrumental pieces blending elements of jazz, folk, and modern rock 10 MP3 Songs FOLK: Modern Folk, CLASSICAL: New Age Details: This debut album from St. Louis native Vincent Varvel is a collection of instrumental, guitar-driven music ranging in influence from Bill Frisell to Daniel Lanois to Leo Kottke to Pat Metheny. Varvel has been performing for some 20 years, and has spent much of the last 6 years touring the U.S. and Europe with the Peter Mayer Group, lending his brilliant sense of harmony and texture to that band. In addition to Varvel on acoustic and electric guitars, this album features excellent work by bassist and co-producer Jim Mayer, percussionist R. Scott Bryan, and drummer Roger Guth. Each piece on the album paints a different instrumental landscape for the listener to enjoy. Here follows a review from "Wind and Wire" VINCENT VARVEL Pictures Postcards self-released (2000) Aided by three accompanists (Jim Mayer on acoustic and electric basses, R S Bryan on percussion, and Roger Guth on drums), guitarist Vincent Varvel spins a variety of musical tales on his album, Pictures Postcards. Encompassing a wide assortment of styles, tempos, and moods, the songs on the album act like a "musical" travelogue of sorts. From the opening friendliness of "pleased to meet you," with its gentle midtempo rhythms and sprightly finger-style guitar work to the closing track, the loping delta bluesy number, "lift me up," (featuring nice tasty electric guitar licks from Vincent, sounding a bit like Ry Cooder) whatever you're in the mood for in the way of guitar-led instrumental music, you'll probably find it somewhere in the grooves of this accomplished and listenable recording. While a few cuts are more in the "classic" acoustic guitar style of contemporary new age music (such as "lullaby"), most songs are off that particular beaten track. "off in the distance" has muted but stinging electric leads and a shuffling mysterioso rhythm to it. "postcard" blends adroit finger-style acoustic with electric chords played like synthesizer washes in the background; the cut is reminiscent of Jamie Bonk at times or even a less

jazzy Earl Klugh. "foreign movie" has a decidedly Parisian feel to it, maybe Vincent was somewhat influenced by the greats from "the Hot Club" (where greats like Stephanne Grapelli and Django Reinhardt played). "a long road to travel" even has a tint of contemporary country to it, mixed with a nice easy rocking beat. The sidemen all handle their chores with dexterity and verve. Percussion, in particular, adds a lot of "oomph" to some songs, but the bassist and drummer as just as inspired at times throughout the album. But, in all honesty, this is Vincent's show and he displays remarkable ease as he cruises through everything from quasi-jazz territory ("she spoke to me of angels") to Steely Dan-like blues-rock fusion ("swami got lost"). What all this diversity adds up to is a lot fun, some gentle moments, and even some rousing kick-ass numbers as well. If you're a lover of both acoustic and electric guitar-led instrumental music, you can't miss with Pictures Postcards. Rarely does an artist show this much versatility while also displaying both prodigious talent and solid compositional skills. All in all, the CD is a solid hit and recommended! --Read a review at: indie-music.com/article.php?sid=476 --Here's an excerpt from an article featured on St.LouisToday.com: Guitarist and St. Louis native Vincent Varvel has played The Pageant as part of Sarah Cloud's band and toured the world with the Peter Mayer Group. But as a solo artist, Varvel is starting at ground zero. He's playing coffeehouses in support of his first album, "Pictures and Postcards," released October 2000. "Having been a sideman for as long as I have, a lot of musicians know who I am," Varvel says, "but it doesn't pull a lot of weight yet with club owners." "Pictures and Postcards" is a dreamy, swirling, instrumental blend of jazz, folk and rock. With its luscious melodies and smooth rhythm, the album soothes the mind and encourages day dreaming. Each song on the album is the soundtrack to a different daydream - even for Varvel. He was thinking of an early 1900s French cafe when he wrote "Foreign Movie." For Varvel, the opening track, "Pleased to Meet You," evokes an image of people playing acoustic guitars on a front porch. The tunes likely won't conjure the same scenes for others. Due to the absence of lyrics on the album, listeners must make their own interpretations. Varvel says he uses strong melodies and various textures to help feed listeners' imaginations. While growing up in North St. Louis County, Varvel took piano and clarinet lessons. He initially was more interested in sports, but his tastes shifted once he picked up the guitar at age 16. "I wish I could say I was one of those kids (who) immediately took to music, but for a long time it was a chore," Varvel says. Florissant, Mo., native Tim Reynolds, who now is known for collaborating with Dave Matthews, was Varvel's first guitar teacher. Reynolds introduced Varvel to jazz while Varvel was working at a musical instrument store

after graduating from St. Louis University High School. As a student at Southern Illinois University - Edwardsville, Varvel continued his foray into jazz. When jazz greats such as Michael Brecker and Peter Erskine visited the school to conduct clinics and perform concerts, Varvel played on stage with them. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in jazz performance in 1984. Varvel worked on the "Pictures and Postcards" songs at various times during a five year period. He often drew inspiration for and wrote songs while touring with the Peter Mayer Group. "Swami Got Lost (On Bourbon Street)" is an example. "Swami" is Varvel himself. And he really has gotten lost in the French Quarter in New Orleans. His bandmates in the Bottom Line gave him the nickname. - Sarah Settle, Post-Dispatch Online Music Editor

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