

Mp3 Joel Styzens - Relax Your Ears



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After Joel Styzens was diagnosed with tinnitus and hyperacusis, he left his career as a professional drummer to begin composing for guitar and collaborating with CSO cellist Katinka Kleijn, resulting in these captivating, uplifting meditations. 12 MP3 Songs in this album (47:40) ! Related styles: NEW AGE: Neo-Classical, NEW AGE: Relaxation People who are interested in Pat Metheny Yo-Yo Ma Bill Frisell should consider this download. Details: *EDITOR'S PICK* (see CD Baby editor Peter Swensen's review below) One year after moving to Chicago, Joel Styzens had established a strong presence in the local jazz and rock scenes and landed a teaching position at Chicago's renowned Old Town School of Folk Music. Then, suddenly one morning, he woke up with the pitch of A-sharp ringing in his ears; his ears had become so sensitive that it hurt to hear his own voice. He was diagnosed with severe tinnitus and hyperacusis -- ringing of the ears and extreme sound sensitivity. These hearing conditions were the result of a series of childhood ear infections and years of playing in loud rock groups and percussion ensembles. Styzens' career as a professional drummer was effectively over, but he sought help through an audiologist and began going through sound therapy. Faced with the possibility of living in a world without making music, Joel started composing on acoustic guitar. These guitar compositions evolved into complex, melodic meditations. Using varied and unusual tunings for nearly every song he writes, Styzens creates an inviting, hypnotic atmosphere with unique guitar drones beneath memorable, uplifting melodies. "I hear all these full, resonant sounds and chords that I just can't find in standard tuning, or typical alternate tunings. I had to find a way to make them," says Styzens. "I tune and place my fingers on the fretboard until the right sounds appear." While the resulting compositions are unexpected and full, they retain a minimal musicality reminiscent of modern-day composer Philip Glass or film composer Thomas Newman. Styzens combines the soothing aspects of New Age music with the compelling energy

of Classical Crossover. The songs on "Relax Your Ears" create a sanctuary, a space apart from dense environments and crowded lifestyles, offering a place to clear the listener's mind. "Relax Your Ears" features cellist Katinka Kleijn of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, as well as local Chicago musicians Rob Clearfield on piano, Casey Fitzpatrick on saxophone, and Greg Fundis on percussion. Guitar and cello carries throughout, but saxophone gives a jazz flavor to songs like "Take Anything." Cajon adds a world music flair to songs like "7 8 6," which shows off Styzens' percussionist sensibilities through shifting time signatures. "This isn't background music," says Styzens. "It can work for driving in your car, yoga, meditation -- but there's also a lot going on. It's engaging. And anyway, who says background music can't be good?" And though "Relax Your Ears" covers an array of musical styles, the album retains a distinct unity, like movements of a symphony or moments of a film score. Styzens has also started a record label, A-Sharp Records, named after the pitch of his tinnitus, A#. He hopes the label will be a place where musicians with hearing ailments can connect, collaborate, and give each other support. "These ear problems have been the worst thing that I've had to deal with, especially as a musician," says Styzens. "But they've opened possibilities that I never knew existed. Composing my own music is more fulfilling than anything I've ever done -- it comes from a very deep place."

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