

FERENC SNÉTBERGER

TITOK (ECM)



ECM has had a special intimate connection with the guitar from the label's start. A disproportionate amount of important jazz-guitar music has appeared on ECM. Pat Metheny, Bill Frisell, John Abercrombie, Ralph Towner, Terje Rypdal and Egberto Gismonti are among the guitarists who launched this rich history. More recently, Wolfgang Muthspiel, Eivind Aarset, Jakob Bro, Ben Monder and Dominic Miller have continued it.

Titok is the latest guitar offering from ECM, and it is remarkable in the wholeness of its realization. It is also remarkable that a 60-year-old guitar master like Ferenc Snétberger could be so far under the radar. He does have one previous release on ECM, *In Concert*, from 2016, but his discography, mostly on Enja, is thin. He wrote all 13 songs here, and they reflect diverse influences: Roma music ("Álom"); European classical ("Renaissance"); Latin ("Orange Tango"); jazz (most of the rest). But these cultural references are almost incidental to Snétberger's encompassing aesthetic. *Titok* is warm, elegant music, unassuming in its romanticism, firm in its substance, organic in its natural, unhurried flow. Inseparable from the allure of this album is ECM's excellent recorded sound. The sonic glow of Snétberger's acoustic nylon-string guitar is as sensual as a caress.

Five of the 13 pieces are in-studio improvisations. They sound almost as jewel-like and complete as longstanding Snétberger compositions like "Kék Kerék," which is a quietly dramatic unfolding of inevitable melody.

The rhythm section here assures that Snétberger's light touch will be applied in a context of intensity. Bassist Anders Jormin and drummer Joey Baron have appeared on many ECM recordings but never together. Baron's brushes are like flickering fire. Jormin is a special atmospheric resource, offering haunting pizzicato on "Álom," lingering arco on "Leolo" and resonant blends with Snétberger's guitar throughout. **THOMAS CONRAD**

