

TOM HARRISON

LP Review: Roland Nipp
By Tom Harrison | May 17, 2017

One of the tricks of winning more technique is not losing your soul.

It happens. When a musician first learns, there is something pure about what they produce. It is them, doing the best they can with what skill they have. There is personality. As they learn more, the technical ability of what they do takes precedence over raw emotion. Possibly they're thinking, "This piece is too easy; I'll throw in an extra change. Make it more of a challenge. Show people how clever I can be." What you've got is now an impressive piece of music but one that is further removed from the heart.

This doesn't apply to all musicians. Joe Satriani may be very skillful but there is a sense of humour and an awareness that makes him accessible on a human level. This is where Roland Nipp comes in. Like Satriani, he plays instrumental rock guitar but he is not so flashy that you become more aware of the playing than the player.

This is sort of like the singer who dazzles with melismas and other vocal acrobatics at the expense of the song. While you're thinking "That person sure can sing," you lose sight of the meaning of the song, and stop caring. You find yourself wishing the singer would stop showing off and just sing.

Nipp's *In The Cool Of The Dawn* is like that in that the mood or intent is suggested by each track and there isn't the distraction of fret wizardry. It says what it means.

Meet Me at Pigalle evokes Parisian cafes whereas *Restless* suggests straight ahead rock in the Duane Eddy tradition.

Londonderry Air gets its inspiration from the old ballad *Danny Boy*.

1968, all sitar-ish and Cream riffs, is where Nipp allows some self-effacing insight. It's saved from being mere pastiche by being a real composition of substance.

In The Cool Of The Dawn has humanity and that is an achievement, because there is a temptation to show off and lose sight of what's really important.

This might be the same guy who once sent me cassettes of his first forays into playing. In the late '80s, I had a show on CFOX radio called *Demolisten*. I'd play cassette demos and comment on them, offer insights if I could and maybe a little criticism along with encouragement. Among the many tapes sent to *Demolisten* were a few of an aspiring guitarist. They were simplistic by comparison, but melodic and had potential.

Years went by and albums by Roland Nipp started appearing. The production was more advanced and sophisticated while Nipp evidently had played and overdubbed all the other instruments himself. The guitar still was the focus, and, if this was the same guy, it's become rewarding to see his progress.

He's still producing music on his own and has retained his humility.

In the Cool of the Dawn is his sixth album and there's been refinement and progress in each one. Here's hoping the 7th will have the same personality.