

An Open Sky

By

Ryan Judd

Written by

Steve Sheppard

The art of acoustic is now upon us and a finer and classier collection of soothing compositions you are unlikely to find. Judd has created something reflective, poignant and emotive here on the guitar for us all to dream within for a short while.

We start this sojourn of tone off with the opener **Looking Back**. I adored this, not just because it gave me personally a few minutes to reflect on my journey so far, but also because Judd plays exactly how I am practising as a guitarist myself. This gentle finger style, the harmonics and the reflective mood created by the use of minor chords made this a winner of an opener for me. The mix of Cello and Guitar works divinely and manifests a truly thoughtful musical interlude, one that perhaps we can drift back in our memories, sad and happy too.

As we move gently down this forest pathway of unbridled blissful string based music, we come across a charming piece called **The Embrace**, there is a wonderful warmth that flows from the instrumentation here, and one could easily see a meeting between two old friends, the smile on the face and of course the warm embrace. This also happens to be the longest track off the album at well over five minutes, and that gives us plenty of time to enjoy this warming connection.

We now arrive at the home of the title track **An Open Sky**, the style of performance on this album reminds me of one of my favourite guitarists in *Robert Linton*. There is a familiarity of harmony and reflection that manifests something deeply moving, yet kind and compassionate, much like the musical

contents of this, the title track. The Cello here really embraces the moment and while there is a slight elevation in tempo, this only goes to musically create a vast soundscape for me to enjoy further.

The gentleness of performance can truthfully be felt right here on this offering called **Heartstrings**. The symbiotic partnership of instrumentation can also be felt here in a sublime heart on the sleeve performance from the artist. There is a soft energy about the structure of this composition that I adored, and this mournful yet honest offering is very touching indeed.

At the half way marker we come across a really ambient offering entitled **Weightless**. Judd's careful progression through this offering was sublime and created a delicate melody for us to enjoy as well. There was also a really delightful lightness of energy and spirit with in the composition that I utterly revelled in; at times it seemed that the Cello was assisting the guitar to raise its vibrations even higher, what a clever arrangement indeed.

I sit here in the latter part of October awaiting a huge storm to pull us even further into the arms of the season of falling leaves and mists, and we now arrive at the perfect soundtrack entitled **Autumn Light**. Interestingly enough this is the shortest track off the album at just over three minutes, but Judd manifests something very redolent of the subject matter, and the cello here weaves a tone of darker longer nights by the log fire perhaps, this is a wonderfully artistic offering.

When you arrive at this next offering you should sense an entirely new energy, a Latin feel perhaps. **Spanish Sunrise** may also give you a further hint as to the nature of the inspiration behind this offering. I can relate to this, I lived in a country where cloud is king, now I live in one where the sun has taken the throne. Perhaps the author of this arrangement wishes for something similar in the future, and Ryan it is to be recommended, your music would be welcome at any sunrise across the Mediterranean.

Her Beauty Shines Through is up next. I found something quite beautiful about this arrangement, one that seemed to build with an honesty that is bathed in a loving performance. The careful and delicate presentation here on guitar made this one shine bright across the melodic horizon. After listening to this a few

times I also wondered if it would be possible to put lyrics with it, it has that sublime sense of being a very memorable song indeed.

We have now arrived at the penultimate offering of the album and it is called **Under the Willow Tree**. I have spent many hours in nature, by rivers and under Willow trees, and can say from experience that this would be the perfect musical accompaniment for such a moment of reflection. The style reminds me of our very own *Steve Orchard* from his album *Riverboat*, that finger and strum works so very well here and manifests a summer moment by a stream with a blissful ease and it indeed is my favourite piece off the release.

So finally we have made our way to the end of our musical path and we are given one last gift before we must leave, this is called **Winter Harbor**. Cello's are wonderful at creating winter moods and this is manifested here with a flowing narrative so mood filled and sullen. Judd's guitar is almost picking its way through the snow as he goes; this has to be one of the most picturesque tracks off the album.

An Open Sky is a pleasure to listen too, the melding of tone between Cello and Guitar is sublime, each composition is created with care and attention to detail, but also with a true honesty and a loving sense of compassion. **An Open Sky** is a beautiful album that will not only speak to your heart, but to your very soul itself and as such, this release should be an album that features in everyone's musical playlist as soon as possible, you can never have enough beauty in your life.