

BLUES REVUE

PETER NOVELLI

Louisiana Roots & Blues

Chalet Music

OK, so maybe it was easy to overlook selftitled Peter Novelli's debut in 2011. Who knew he could create such a potent combination of New Orleans street rhythms, swampy backbeats, jazzy infusions, and a most sincere and innovative approach to the blues? There is no excuse to miss *Louisiana Roots & Blues*, Novelli's second CD, which is overloaded with the taste of Louisiana in every song. Novelli is a superb songwriter and arranger, who tempers his guitar to a point that it seems to be having a conversation with its audience. There is nothing forceful or overwrought in his playing, with each note seeming to have the ability to carry on the conversation. What his guitar lacks in volume or aggression is surpassed by his delicate touch that lets each note dance.

In "Dyin' By Numbers," he recounts a church wall of New Orleans's murder victims with the date of their murders and their ages. "Eyes Talk" is about the non-verbal communications that go toward helping two partners understand themselves. In "Treme 3 A.M." Novelli's guitar is used as a counterpoint to Shamarr Allen's haunting trumpet as a man searches in vain through a New Orleans neighborhood for the woman he so badly desires. A second version of the song also is included here as an instrumental, with more latitude for Allen's trumpet to tell the story. Its inclusion provides further evidence that Novelli's creativity is in full-flight.

Novelli has backed himself with a topflight core band that includes drummer Darryl White (Tab Benoit, Chris Thomas King), bassist Chris Chew (North Mississippi



Allstars), and keyboard player Joe Krown (Joe Krown Trio and Gatemouth Brown). He employs singers Elaine and Lisa Foster for emphasis. Sidemen include Chris Thomas King on lap slide, Chubby Carrier on accordion and trumpeter Allen. All the songs here are originals with the exception of John Hiatt's "Lovin' A Hurricane." Clearly, Hiatt has been a major influence of Novelli's songwriting, but the transplant from Syracuse, N.Y., proves time and again he is up to the challenge.

Novelli's second CD demonstrates his clear ability to write and perform songs with the most soulful artists anywhere. His blues are sophisticated and creative in a way that so few blues CDs are today. He deserves attention as one of the best storytellers in the blues today.

– *Michael Kinsman*

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