

PETER NOVELLI

Louisiana Roots and Blues (Chalet Music)

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There are times on *Louisiana Roots & Blues* that you'd wish Peter Novelli would just burn a fast one for a change of pace, but, nonetheless, he's the master of searing tones and crunchy, mid-tempo grooves. He's not one to rush a guitar solo, instead taking the time to deliver something meaningful. He uses guests sparingly but effectively, so each has plenty of presence in the arrangement. Chris Thomas King trades growling licks on lap steel with Novelli on two tracks; Chubby Carrier impresses with his seemingly effortless

but impeccable rides ("Zydeco Lady").

What holds the album together best are the Louisiana-themed songs. New Orleans can seem like a dark, sinister town after sundown, something that Novelli captures well. He finds himself lost in the Treme at 3 a.m. as Shamarr Allen's haunting trumpet solo played from a second-story balcony pierces the night's silence. A scantily clad stripper walking home after a night's work is vivid enough "(She's My) Voodoo Baby," but the song also casts her as a normal being en route to an expecting lover. On "Dyin' By Numbers," Novelli's protagonist is a callous coroner who's seen too many senseless murders caused by foul play.

CD sales being what they are these days, Novelli aims for the soundtrack market with instrumental versions of "Dyin'..." and "Treme 3 a.m." — not a bad strategy. However, for all intents and listening purposes, the instrumentals shouldn't have been sequenced consecutively but, rather, juxtaposed between vocal tracks. That said, Novelli still manages to craft a record worth checking out.