

Arts & Entertainment

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The Philadelphia Inquirer

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New Recordings

Ratings: ★★★★★ Excellent, ★★★ Good, ★★ Fair, ★ Poor

The David Joel Quartet

Spiral Sky

(www.davidjoel.com ★★★)

Guitarist David Joel assembles a surprisingly nuanced outing for his first CD. The Philly-based Joel is a 1986 graduate of Boston's Berklee College of Music and holds a masters degree from the New England Conservatory of Music.

His quartet with keyboardist John Stenger, bassist Paul Gehman, and drummer Dan Monaghan can tend toward the nonthreatening, derivative, pop end of jazz. Yet that doesn't describe his whole range or even make him unlikable to many people.

Joel's compositions and the quartet's playing consistently conjure up unexpected sounds that stretch a listener's concepts without head-butting them. "The Star Spangled Gospel" is a soulful, Hendrix-like treatment, and the title track is big-toned and Metheny-esque.

"Western Lies" comes with an impressive cascade of sounds and some requisite guitar frenzy, while "Eastern Sounds" has these kung fu-like sound effects that thankfully give way to some serious playing.

— K.S.

Joel's quartet appears from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. today at Northeast Regional Library, 2228 Cottman Ave. No cover. Information: 215-686-5322