



# the run-off groove (#189)

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*By John Book*

Jazz guitarist **David Joel** has been doing his thing for many years, not only in jazz but also making himself known as a classical guitarist. For his debut album *Spiral Sky* (Turning Point), which is performed with his Quartet, it's the kind of jazz which will bring to mind the best works from **John McLaughlin**, **Al Di Meola**, and **Larry Coryell**.

What I hear in Joel's music is his ability to play and embrace all kinds of styles, to the fluidity of the playing itself. Judging from the song titles and the liner notes, it seems Joel is a very spiritual player, and he brings that to the forefront. In "The Dance Of Life" it truly sounds like what the song title implies, a dance where one has to go and explore this existence and try to find our reason for being here. His playing is subtle but it works beautifully. Then there's a two part track beginning with "Eastern Truth", where he and the band (**Dan Monaghan** on drums, **Paul Gehman** on bass, and **John Stenger** on keyboards) play with the kind of aura that is reminiscent of many of **Herbie Hancock's** Warner Bros.-era albums, or the Eastern mysticism that was a part of a good portion of jazz fusion in the late 60's and early 70's (especially Coryell). You hear Joel and Gehman communicating with each other as if they're trying to convey a message to the listener. After this great 11 minute track, they devote another 11 minutes to "Western Lies", and it seems obvious what they're trying to say. It takes awhile, but then out of nowhere Joel begins a solo that sounds fierce and wicked, perhaps his anger being conveyed in the music, and suddenly there is a major shift in tone for the rest of the album. One might wonder if he is touching upon the downward spiral of the world, and perhaps the best thing to do is find a way to look up to the "Spiral Sky", which he does in the 11 minute title track.

Joel's Quartet touch on everything from hard bop to bebop, smooth ECM-styled tranquility to incredible fusion, and they do each of them with equal passion, and that comes from musicians who are in tune with the music and each other. He's a guitarist that guitar heads will love, because he can be cool, calm, and collected on one part of the song, and then he brings all of these euphoric emotions to where you can feel the intensity, only for him to hold back and allow the band to shine, which is what all great jazz bands are about. This is a great jazz band, all great musicians in their own right, helping out a guitarist who has to be heard to be believed.

(*Spiral Sky* is available from **CDBaby**.)

<http://therunoffgroove.blogspot.com/>