

## Enlightened Piano Radio Review

“Solo Piano Destruction” is an album recently recorded and performed by pianist James Woolwine. In addition, this is his debut solo piano album. The recording is made up of mostly original material, although there are a few cover songs sprinkled throughout as well.

My first impression of the album was of course the artwork on the cover, which in this case showcases a healthy sense of humor on James's part, and immediately drew my attention. It's refreshing to see someone express themselves bravely in their cover art, and James most certainly does that with this album and its title, “Solo Piano Destruction.”

But how destructive is this album? There are certainly moments in the recording where James is able to show off his skills at the piano, and he's no slouch. His playing is clear, studied, timely, and dynamic. He also utilizes some unique chord progressions and approaches to scales and melodies that one doesn't hear very often at all. His dynamics are not what one would expect either. Moments of soft textures followed by loud, “in your face” chords and octaves keep the listener on the edge of their seat! All of this to say that James has a very different approach to the piano, not at all what might be considered “standard” in the solo piano genre, and for this reviewer that is welcome and refreshing.

Overall, the recording has a very diverse range of sounds, songs and arrangements. One can hear the “old world” styles of playing in the opening track, “Overkill.” There are many different progressions in this track that are reminiscent of Chopin and the old masters, modern Contemporary styles, and even some diminished chord eighth notes which take us back to the saloons of the old west. We begin with an energetic upward scale, and back down the piano with a broken Bbm scale, before leading into a “villan and the train track” sort of feel. This quickly changes, as the piece covers a lot of ground and one never

really knows for sure where it's going or where they'll wind up next. It's an exploratory piece, and at just under five minutes it's probably my favorite track on the album.

“Ivory Dance” is another song that travels to the unexpected and utilizes many different moods to convey a message. It begins softly, serene, and wakes you up at about thirty seconds in – for about five seconds. Then just as quickly you're taken back to the soft serene sounds of beautiful melodies. There's also some really nice chromatic movement that takes place about two thirds of the way through the piece, before returning to the main theme. It's a lovely piece to listen to, and will have you imagining you're in concert and listening to James himself as he dances on the ivories.

My third choice in favorites would be “From Andy,” a track that is a bit different from the others in and of itself. Here we have a piece of music that moves along, beginning with a minor introduction and moving it's way into an energizing and uplifting theme. From there the piece alternates back and forth between the moods, utilizing some really nice syncopation and chord stabs, key changes, and a slower, powerfully majestic movement about two thirds of the way through the piece. Ultimately we return to the gentle back and forth movement that we enjoyed at the beginning of the piece. Several more key changes occur before the hard hitting, expressive final chords bring the listener to a majestic ending.

“Solo Piano Destruction” is an album that is full of surprises, styles and diversity, with the only exception being jazz piano. If you're a lover of solo piano music that's not afraid to explore uncharted musical territory, this album is for you! James has something very different to say here, and in so doing has created a great piece of art. Have a listen to it and see for yourself!