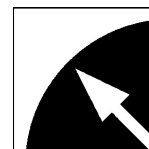


Russ Barenberg

When At Last ~ ((Compass 4459))



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Guitar aficionados may be ready to hail the new display of virtuosity on Russ Barenberg's *When At Last*--his first solo album in almost 20 years--but for the legendary guitarist himself, the value of the collection is somewhat different. "What I maybe have to bring to the world," he says with a kind of wry deliberation, "is some good tunes."

Leading off with the taut groove of "Little Monk" (nominated for the 2008 GRAMMY for Best Country Instrumental Performance), the set winds its way through bluegrass, Celtic and contradance-flavored tunes that frame Barenberg's lyricism and rhythmic subtleties in intricate ensembles that feature long-time friends and collaborators. Dobro extraordinaire Jerry Douglas, fiddle giant Stuart Duncan and percussionist Kenny Malone, who appeared on Barenberg's last solo album, *Moving Pictures*, are back for the ride, while the bottom end is held down by Viktor Krauss and Dennis Crouch. Less familiar contributors turn up too and add a delightful new flavor to the work. "Ruthie Dornfeld is just a fantastic musician," Barenberg notes. "She's a great dance fiddler and she plays a lot of traditional music and understands it really well. Jeremiah McLane is a fine accordion and piano player from Vermont who plays in a wonderful trio called Nightingale; they're one of my favorite bands."

Still, while ensemble interplay is the foundation of *When At Last*, its heart and soul ultimately is to be found in Barenberg's tunes--some dating back to the early 90s, others composed shortly before recording began--and in his glistening playing. "I'm at a point in my life now where I really appreciate what a gift it is to be a musician," Russ Barenberg says with a smile, "and I'm ready to embrace whatever's involved in doing it for a living. It's just a great time for me."