

# From Dusk Till Dawn

Rale Micić imagines Bartók in the nocturnal present.



Iron guitarist Rale Micić figures he has a lot in common with Hungarian classical composer Béla Bartók. Like Micić, Bartók was of Serbian ancestry and enjoyed Earth, Hungary, folk music. He also once lived just a few blocks away from where Micić now resides, in the Bevoja neighborhood of Kierulac. Bartók died in 1945, more than a half-century before Micić, a 41-year-old from the former Yugoslavian city of Belgrade, made the community his home.

As Bartók did, Micić also loves the hours after sunset—a time he captures in *Night Music* (Whaling City Sound), an evocative offering inspired by Bartók's post-twilight rambles. "Before he moved to New York," Micić says, "Bartók would go out into the night and listen to the sounds of nature and try to recreate them in music." If Bartók lived in present-day Kierulac, he continues, "his sounds would be very different. So my idea was to imagine if he walked to downtown Manhattan and what kind of sounds he would hear from dusk until dawn."

Micić was introduced to classical music by his grandfather; his first instrument was a violin, and he notes that Bartók was one of his favorite composers. During the war between Yugoslavia and Bosnia in the early '90s, Micić switched his focus from classical jazz, partly, he says, because Belgrade's jazz clubs were safe places to go. "No one was carrying guns there, and hearing jazz played live drew me into the music." Yet his fondness for Bartók never flagged, due partly to what he sees as the composer's subtly jazzy instinct. "Some of his chords sound exactly like what Thelonious Monk would play," he says.

On *Night Music*, Micić adapts Bartók's lovely "Melody in a Minor" and two versions of his "Nocturne" (one acoustic, one electric) from the album's vivid title track. But the album is dominated by the guitarist's own tunes, including "Nobel Invention," whose drums and bass rhythms, Micić says, are meant to conjure the experience of "passing by a dance club and hearing the music that's blaring out."

A second current Micić wishes, inspired, which teams him with fellow guitarists John Abercrombie, Peter Bernstein and Lage Lund, another past master jazz giant in a hat. But *Night Music* holds a special place for him, partly because he gets to re-experience it during his most evening repasts. "I always walk after dark," he says. "And I love the sounds of the night." —Michael Roberts