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YOUNG & ROLLINS "Salsa Flamenca" Baja/TSR Records

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Where do Young & Rollins, the Washington-based guitar duo, rank in contemporary flamenco music? Right alongside Ottmar Liebert, Jesse Cook, and Strunz and Farah. Those are some of the better-known artists who, like Dan Young and Lawson Rollins, recently contributed tracks to the CD compilation, "Guitar Greats: The Best of New Flamenco."

Naturally, "Salsa Flamenca," the duo's debut CD, offers a more comprehensive illustration of Y&R's guitar artistry, and it's a more colorful one to boot. As the album title suggests, the duo draws from both Afro-Caribbean and Spanish traditions, yet it also tosses acoustic blues riffs, funk bass lines, pop melodies and Brazilian rhythms into the mix. The result is a percussive, tuneful brand of worldbeat, crackling with dramatic, six-string flourishes and tempered by several seductive or hummable melodies.

From the album's outset, it's obvious that Young and Rollins make for a complementary pairing--the former being well-versed in blues, jazz and rock, the latter schooled in flamenco and classical music. Yet with the help of a rhythm section that prominently features percussionist Alfredo Mojica, the duo integrates their influences so deftly that the guitars often create a seamless weave of melody and motion, despite mood shifts that range from the fiery ("Scorpion") to the breezy ("Julio's Song"). As a result, the album's 10 instrumentals, all composed by Y&R, reveal not only the duo's eclectic tastes but also an uncommonly close rapport.

--Mike Joyce