

DON LATARSKI

# Virtuoso of 'great taste and chops'

PHOTO BY BRIAN LANKER

**V**INTAGE GUITAR MAGAZINE has described Don Latarski as “a guitarist of great taste and chops.” Latarski’s fluid, uniquely American style incorporates genres from jazz and blues to rockabilly and swing. He can serve up a plate of steaming Cajun funk on a Fender Stratocaster just as effortlessly as he dishes out Texas twang on an archtop acoustic.

Latarski’s original melodies have been a staple of the Eugene music scene since the ‘70s, when he first began mixing it up with local players as his jazz-rock combo, Lon Guitarski, performed at prime local venues. More recently, his founding role in the groups Rue de Blues and Rue d’Acoustic, and his collaboration with jazz vocalist Marilyn Keller and other preeminent local musicians, has established him among the best of Eugene’s virtuoso players.

Latarski, 53, has written numerous tutorials on guitar theory, performance and technique. He is head of guitar studies at the University of Oregon School of Music, and is the sole owner of Crescent Records and the Crescent Studio recording facility. “It just seems a logical step in order to not be at the mercy of any record label,” he says. “This arrangement gives me all the flexibility I need to create and produce any type of music I want to explore.”

As a veteran player in position to measure the musical pulse of Eugene, Latarski offers the observation: “The local scene is pretty vibrant right now. There seem to be lots of people wanting to get together and do music—and that’s healthy!”