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**Vigil "China Soul" 06.01.06**  
 (Siesta) Keith Boyd

One of the many great things about this wired and



interconnected world we stumble around in is having access to art and music from other countries. Once upon a time say, in any decade before the nineties, your average American music fan would have been hard-pressed to find almost anything that wasn't a. being played on the radio and b. made in one the "big two" music countries (U.S. & U.K.). Sure there were a few specialty shops and a handful of mail-order houses but unless one was in the know you were pretty much out of luck. The recordings that one could find were presented to the public as either audio anthropology or kitschy exotica. This isn't to cast dispersions. On the contrary, an album series like Smithsonian's "Folkways Recordings" helped preserve sound treasures from Bali to the Mississippi Delta that informed and inspired generations. These types of records are however, doomed to be confined to the realm of folklore. They are often representations of a particular tradition from a particular tribe or ethnic group. Consequently they convey a sense of anonymity in regards to the artist and artistry. Don't get me wrong, this isn't necessarily a bad thing. The everyday and embedded music of the world is one of the things that give life meaning. People singing work songs, drumming to

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**July 29, 2006**

Al Green at Viejas

accompany marriages and funerals, fiddle playing from the pub, all of it, all of it is vital. Our age however is another matter. We mix and match styles and sounds the way another era's musicians switched chords and tempos. You've got hybrids like the punk/gypsy/ska/folk of Gogol Bordello and the psychedelic/freak-out/drone/troubadourisms of Acid Mother's Temple . It turns out that location actually isn't everything. One way or another music finds its' way to the right listener. In this case the right music found the right listener in Pedro Vigil. Vigil's new CD "China Soul" (Siesta Records) is a charmer. From the first note you are transplanted to a clean and refreshing audio heaven that while referencing various musical styles from around the globe, manages to sound original and unique.

Vigil is primarily the work of Pedro Vigil from Spain and is realized through a huge amount of collaborations with various drummers, organ players, string ensembles, horn sections and pianists. The music is probably best described as a breezy blend of exotic jazz and space-age pop. At times you hear strains of Esquivel or Les Baxter. The title track, "China Soul" has an antequy march rhythm which is overrun by dreamy washes of stings and cut through by a reverb soaked surf guitar. It's like you've snuck into a private cocktail party for Chairman Mao's inner circle. Someone hands you a martini, you take a sip and realizing it's been spiked, sit back into a velvet armchair to watch a 3-D version of "Endless Summer" play on the ceiling. Other tracks find inspiration from the rhythms and tones of Bossa Nova. " Los Gatos High School " chugs and glides with the punchy grace of Jobim or Burt Bacharach. You listen to it the way you sip a cool drink at the beach under a palapa. All of this artistry comes across as so effortless and smooth that you are left stunned and smiling. Another highlight is the track "Akira Kurasawa". Not only is it

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named for one of the truly great filmmakers of all time, its orchestration, jewelry box tinklings and Star Trek-like Theremin whirl and spin a magical sound. "China Soul" is a pleasure from start to finish. It pays homage to the vintage and retro without sounding dated. The skill of the players and the quality of the compositions make this product of our wired up, multi-culti world a gem. It's a blessing for us to live in an era with access not only to the traditions, but the artistry of music from other countries.