

Lance Canales

The Blessing and The Curse (Music Road Records)

Lance Canales is a descendant of Native Americans and Mexican immigrants whose family picked avocados in the San Joaquin Valley. His gut-wrenching rendition of Woody Guthrie's "Deportee" is a perfect antidote to the Summer of Trump and the centerpiece of *The Blessing and The Curse*. What makes this version unique is it reveals (in a whisper by author Tim Hernandez) the identities of 28 Mexican citizens who perished in a plane crash near Los Gatos Canyon, weaving their names into lyrics that are as important today as they were in 1948. *The Blessing and The Curse* is a stripped-back alchemy of blues, folk and rock played on old instruments; a cigar box guitar, horsehide drums, shovels, hand claps and a peach bucket help produce the starkly beautiful



sounds. Canales' gravelly voice is also a valuable musical instrument. Check it all out on these additional highlights: "California Or Bust," the migrants' mission statement which opens the CD, and a prayer-like "Cold Dark Hole," plus the ominous "Hich-wyah Man," a celebratory "The Farmer" and Rev. Gary Davis' "Death Got No Mercy," with Eliza Gilkyson as duet partner. Jimmy LaFave and Ray Bonneville also contribute on Canales' breakout record. Want authentic? This is it. - Brad Knowles