

SIGNAL to NOISE

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CONTINENTAL RIFFS

Peter Margasak travels the world in search of subversive sounds.

Argentine pianist and composer Fernando Otero sounds more and more like the obvious heir to the Nuevo Tango mantle of Astor Piazzolla, but with his superb new album *Vital* (World Village) he continues to prove that his music is bigger than that. It's a wonderfully austere, dramatic recording indebted as much to contemporary classical music as tango. Most of the pieces are spare duets between Otero and violinist Nick Danielson—only the pieces "Siderata" and "Reforma Mental" feature a larger ensemble, with Hector del Curto on the bandoneon—shot through with the drama, and, less emphatically, the rhythms of the Argentinean style, but Otero's sense of harmony and counterpoint is boundless.