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The Best Music from Around the World

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REVIEWS

SONGLINES

SUSANA BACA

*The Peruvian activist
sowing seeds of hope*

SPECIAL ISSUE

MUSIC AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS

*How artists from
around the world
are taking a stand*

MUSIC FROM

*Morocco, Greece, Japan,
Poland, South Korea and more...*

SOUTH AMERICAN ECO-TRONICA

Rumbles from the jungle

ICE MUSIC

*Far out sounds from
the frozen north*

PIPELINES & PERMAFROST

*First Nation musicians
on the frontline*

BEST NEW ALBUM RELEASES



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STILL MOVING

ponderosamusicrecords

CLICK
HERE

Justin Adams and **Mauro Durante**, managed to get together to make an intense and intimate record "**Still Moving**".

Justin Adams, Guitarist, Producer and Composer, has been a chief collaborator with **Robert Plant** in his band, the "Sensational Spaceshifters". His production on landmark albums by Tinariwen and **Rachid Taha** highlight his feel for North

African groove, while his award-winning projects with Gambian maestro **Juldeh Camara** linked griot tradition with raw blues spirit.

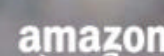
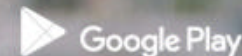
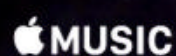
This new collaboration with Canzoniere Greco Salentino violinist/percussionist **Mauro Durante** stems from a concert led by Ludovico Einaudi, the "La Notte della Taranta" in Puglia, where the two first played together, recognizing kindred spirits in the trance rhythms of Taranta. Together they create a raw, stripped-back sound that moves and mesmerizes!

Post-Punk approach has been enriched by a passion for Arabic and African trance/blues, and Mauro Durante, a visionary inheritor of the Taranta roots of his native Puglia recorded live in the studio, without overdubs. Together they found what was essential in their common sound, reaching into tradition from Italy (folk songs like Damme La Manu, classics like Amara Terra Mia) and America (Little Moses, the Carter Family classic). Original songs, like Dark Road Down find common ground between the wild pizzica rhythm of Southern Italy and trance boogie, while Djinn Pulse goes from serene instrumental minimalism to hypnotic catharsis. The song Still Moving evokes Mediterranean migrations as Odyssean trial with ancient frame drum, and raw electric guitar providing a starkly beautiful landscape.

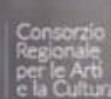
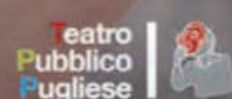
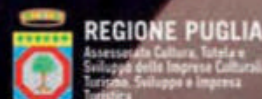
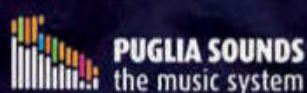


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"PROGRAMMAZIONE PUGLIA SOUNDS RECORD 2020/2021"



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Weather reports

Last issue marked the end of an era. After almost 20 years as editor, Jo Frost hung up her hat and set off for new adventures. *Songlines* is the magazine it is today because of her keen ear for a story and passion for the music of this big wide world. She leaves big shoes to fill.

Perhaps it's the thought of those oversized boots that caused me to dive headfirst into my new role with this special edition of the magazine. The world's leaders are due to convene in Glasgow this November for COP26 to discuss the climate emergency and, wherever you look, the messaging is clear: we don't have much time, our planet is dying. Greenhouse gases, ice mass and ocean temperature are all hitting terrifying new records. The heat is rising and extreme weather is getting more extreme.

This issue, we check in with artists from every region of the globe to find out how they are speaking out against the destruction of our planet. Chris Moss notes that "protest music responds well to immediate and tangible issues. The climate crisis is a different kind of challenge..." From cover star and activist Susana Baca's 'urgent words' to the multimedia project Small Island Big Song, the responses to the challenge have been varied. Perhaps it's not surprising that Indigenous people, those most directly affected, are leading the charge: Sámi musician Sara Marielle Gaup sings songs of the land (p36); First Nations artists are taking a stand against the exploitation of natural resources (p34) and Guarani rapper Owerá minces no words when talking about his community made landless by Brazil's government (p32). Scottish musician Catriona Price tackles the subject with multiple projects (p85) and charity EarthPercent are helping musicians do their part (p19). 'The Earth is sick but it's humanity that should go to the doctor,' sings Québec's Innu reggae man on 'Drame Nature'. Perhaps if we all make enough noise, those in power will finally be forced to listen.

Alexandra Petropoulos, editor



The heat is rising and extreme weather is getting more extreme

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CONTRIBUTORS THIS ISSUE INCLUDE



Catriona Price

Violinist and composer Catriona is half of the folk duo Twelfth Day and a founding member of folk band Fara. Her solo debut, *Hert*, will be released in early 2022. Read about her environmental projects on p85.



Mark LeVine

Mark is professor of history at UC Irvine with a new book, *We'll Play Till We Die: Journeys Across a Decade of Revolutionary Music in the Muslim World*. He traces the thread of Sufi music in Arab EDM on p44.



Marc Fournier

Marc is a music columnist and radio producer and host based on the ancestral territory of the Coast Salish peoples. He speaks to First Nations artists who are speaking out about the climate crisis (p34).

Songlines was launched in 1999 and is the definitive magazine for world music – music that has its roots in all parts of the globe, from Mali to Mexico, India to Iraq. Whether this music is defined as traditional, contemporary, folk or fusion, *Songlines* is the only magazine to truly represent and embrace it. However, *Songlines* is not just about music, but about how the music fits into the landscape; it's about politics, history and identity. Delivered in both print and digital formats, *Songlines*, through its extensive articles and reviews, is your essential and independent guide to a world of music and culture, whether you are starting on your journey of discovery or are already a seasoned fan.

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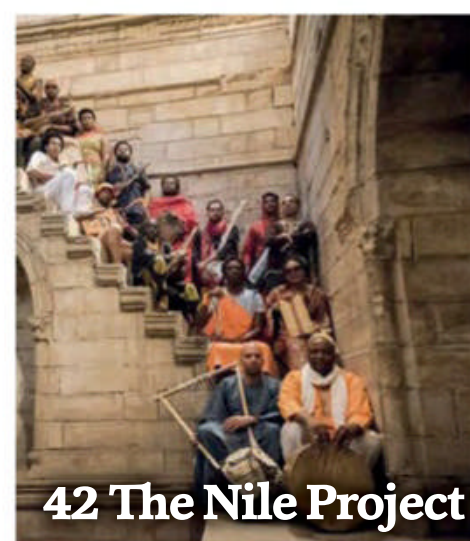
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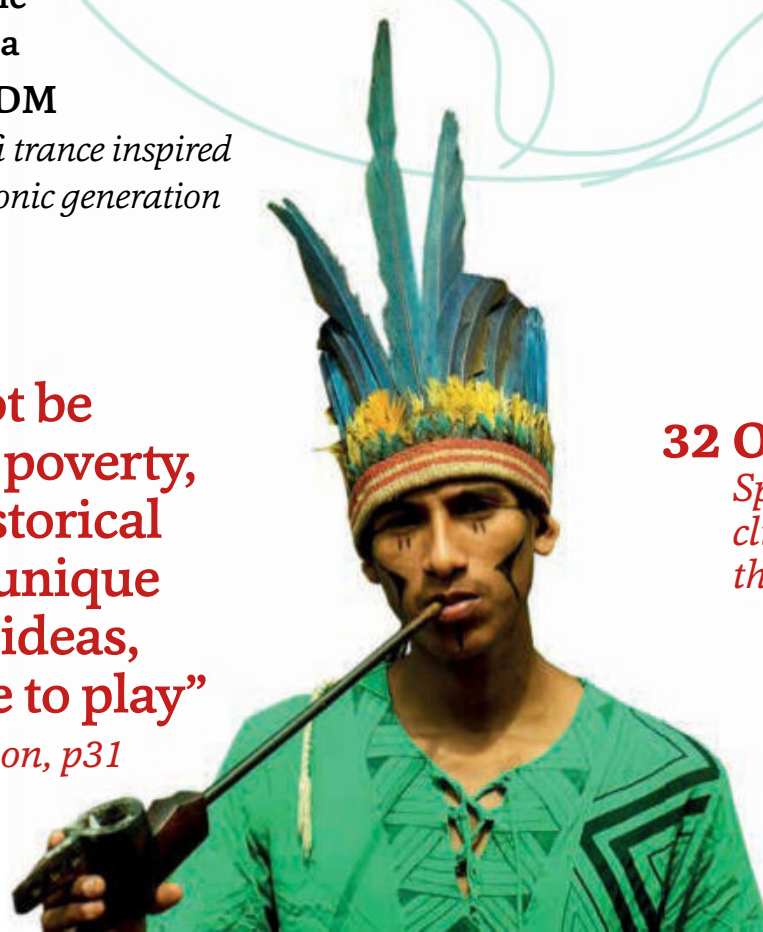
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"The climate crisis cannot be disentangled from politics or poverty, from social injustice and historical inequities... music, with its unique ability to weave dance and ideas, sorrow and joy, has a vital role to play"

Chris Moss introduces our special edition, p31

32 Owerá

Speaking out about the climate crisis and its effect on the Amazon and its peoples



Igor de Paula: ngapakart/Adobe Stock

TOP OF THE WORLD

On your free CD – the editor's selection of the top ten new releases reviewed in this issue



TOP OF THE WORLD PLAYLIST TRACKS



01



06

01 Onipa 'Gbomo (Mtukudzi Homage)'

From *Tapes of Utopia* on Boomerang Records

Ebullient mantras and darting guitar kick up this zippy tribute to Zimbabwean musician, philanthropist and human rights activist Oliver 'Tuku' Mtukudzi. **See p51**



02



07

02 Susana Baca 'Negra del Alma'

From *Palabras Urgentes* on Real World Records

Afro-Peruvian *grande dame* Susana Baca gives this Manuelcha Prado tune a compelling makeover, her plangent vocal tones accompanied by some rousing Andean brass. **See p52**



03



08

03 Davide Ambrogio 'A San Rocco'

From *Evocazioni e Invocazioni* on Catalea

Vivid exhibitions of percussive pencil-plucked guitar and lacerating salvos of riotous *zampogna* ferment wild Calabrian carry-ons – a trance-inducing, saint-seeking invocation. **See p59**



04



09

04 Sofia Rei 'Un Mismo Cielo'

From *UMBRAL* on Cascabelera Records

Argentinian folkloric traditions and digital glitch-stitched futurism combine to form sublime tapestries of impressively questing creativity, the surreal backdrop to Rei's bewitching vocal morse code. **See p68**



05



10

05 Broadside Hacks feat Yorkston/Thorne/Khan 'The Jealous Woman' (A' Bhean Iadach)

From *Songs Without Authors Vol 1* on Broadside Hacks

Aquatic tragedy strikes at the grisly heart of this drone-swaddled take on an old Celtic yarn. **See p60**

06 Béla Fleck 'Vertigo' (feat Bryan Sutton, Edgar Meyer, Sam Bush & Stuart Duncan)

From *My Bluegrass Heart* on Renew Records/BMG

Chambergrass at its finest; a rollicking, virtuosic banjo-and-fiddle fusing flume ride to make you dizzy. **See p54**

07 Meridian Brothers & Conjunto Media Luna 'En Teusaquillo te Pueden Partir la Cara'

From *Paz en la Tierra* on Bongo Joe

Colombian conspirators surf some accordion-powered thermals back to golden-age *vallenato*. **See p56**

08 Justin Adams & Mauro Durante 'Still Moving'

From *Still Moving* on Ponderosa Music Records

Durante's core pulse and its granular rhythmic satellites shift beneath Adams' haunting Cooder-esque axe-work on this plaintive hymnal. **See p67**

09 Omar Sosa & Seckou Keita 'Allah Lénó'

From *SUBA* on bendigedig

Mezzo ivories and chiming *kora* glisten in heavenly iridescence, as Keita's rich voice glides across fluttery instrumental lattice with occasional jazzy outbreaks. **See p71**

10 Australian Art Orchestra, Daniel & David Wilfred, Sunny Kim, Peter Knight & Aviva Endean 'Gadayka/Grenadilla'

From *Hand to Earth* on Australian Art Orchestra

A deep-listening didgeridoo summit churning with elemental power. **See p65**

+ BONUS TRACKS



11



11 The Master Musicians of Joujouka 'Aayta'

From *Live in Paris* on Unlistenable Records

The near-mythical broadcasts of this Sufi-trance collective are casting their transcendent spell over a rising generation of Arabic EDM artists. **See p44**

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12

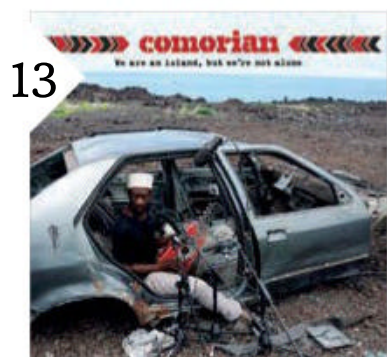


12 Dongyang Gozupa 'Spirit'

From *Gap* on Dongyang Gozupa

Crystalline dulcimer chimes skitter across custom-built percussion and prowling basslines for dramatic detours in a bid to reinvigorate the power trio format. Read more in this issue's Introducing... **See p20**

BUY NOW



13



13 Comorian 'The Devil Doesn't Eat Fire, He Eats Papaya'

From *We Are an Island, but We're Not Alone* on Glitterbeat Records

Producer Ian Brennan, this issue's Beginner's Guide, captures emotions laid gently bare on little-explored islands in the Indian ocean. **See p82**

BUY NOW



14



14 Michael Levy 'Skolion of Seikilos (Ancient Greek Drinking Song)'

From *The Lyre of Apollo: The Chelys Lyre of Ancient Greece* on Michael Levy

Arpeggiated archaeologies come alive on an Olympian redux sourced from ancient musical fragments. **See p89**

BUY NOW



15



15 Yoshikazu Iwamoto 'Shishi'

From *The Spirit of Silence* on Buda Musique

One of musicologist Michael Spitzer's My World selections; a delicate, breezy Japanese *shakuhachi* calls out mournfully, echoing a lost *kodama* (spirit) caught in the twilight. **See p78**

BUY NOW



Karen Irwin

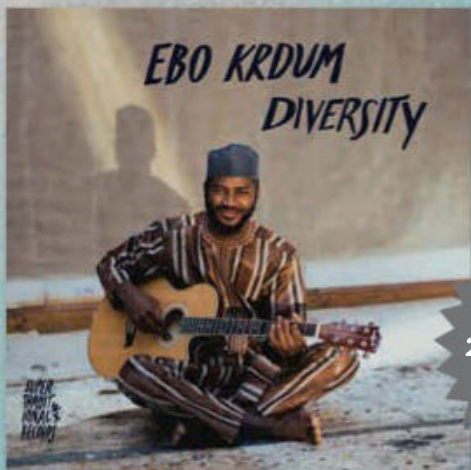
“Western musicology is having a nervous breakdown... In historical terms we're just tiny footnotes to four million years of music”

Turn to p78 for the full *My World* interview with author and academic Michael Spitzer



Free album download on page 49

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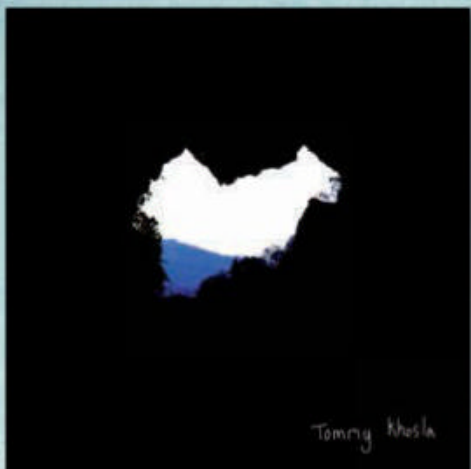
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Another World of Okinawan Music
on Niinuhai Recordings



Tommy Khosla

Vignettes on Vadi Records



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Enigma on No Bounds Records



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Global Sounds from Québec

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Global Sounds from Québec takes you into the unique musical universe of Canada's French-speaking 'La Belle Province.' This carefully curated compilation showcases prominent Québécois musicians of various backgrounds and styles, and testifies to Québec's rich history and multicultural nature. Listeners will hear how the folk influences of the country's Indigenous, French and British founding nations feed into jazz, electro, soul, hip-hop and world music, and discover how talented young Montréal-based artists of African, Middle Eastern, Latin American and Caribbean background joyfully mix sounds and languages to produce the distinctive sound of Québec's musical mosaic!

1. Florent Vollant 'Mishta Meshkenu'

Vollant rose to prominence in the Innu country-folk duo Kashtin in the 1980s, while his remarkable solo career has seen him win awards and inspire great admiration. 'Mishta Meshkenu' (Main Road) is introspective and full of hope, a dedication to friends and community. florentvollant.com

2. Les Grands Hurleurs 'Couteau'

Since their start in 2009, Les Grands Hurleurs have charmed audiences with their modern and accessible traditional music. 'Couteau' tells a tale of betrayal, supported by classic foot stomp rhythms, violins and electric guitars. grandshurleurs.com

3. Djely Tapa 'Barokan'

As Montréal's only female *griot*, from a family steeped in the West African storytelling tradition, Tapa's repertoire includes Sahelian, electro and blues. 'Barokan', the title-track from her debut, is an Afro-futurist tribute to the enduring strength of African women. djelytapa.com

4. Elisapie 'Arnaq'

The Inuk multidisciplinary artist Elisapie Isaac presents 'Arnaq' ('Woman' in Inuktitut) from the highly-praised *Ballad of the Runaway Girl*. This heartfelt appeal for the respect of femininity perfectly blends soft vocals and musical animality. elisapie.com

5. Dominique Fils-Aimé 'While We Wait'

Dominique Fils-Aimé is a soul and jazz singer-songwriter born in Québec and of Haitian background whose career is booming. 'While We Wait', from her anticipated

album *Three Little Words*, is a *faux-naïf* plea for social change. domiofficial.com

6. Vox Sambou 'MaliAyiti'

Sambou is the founding member of the hip-hop collective Nomadic Massive. His socially engaged songs fuse Haitian rhythms, Afrobeat, reggae and hip-hop. 'MaliAyiti' serves as a reminder of Haiti's historical and musical connection with West Africa. voxsamboumusic.com

7. Mélisande [électrotrad] 'Tapetipetap'

This duo combine ethnological passion, traditional instrumentation and electronics to weave unique tapestries. Drawing on interviews with elders about forgotten French-Canadian songs, they've imbued 'Tapetipetap' with historical context. Read more on p21. melisandemusic.com

8. AfrotroniX 'OyO'

Chadian guitarist Caleb Rimtobaye's project mixes electronics with African rhythms and Touareg blues. Sung by Seydina Ndiaye, 'OyO' is about love in the aftermath of war: 'None of this has faded me, but the thought of losing you scares me to death.' afrotronix.com

9. Roberto López 'Cumbiero'

Colombian-Canadian López fashions modern Latin music with refined arrangements. 'Cumbiero', from *Criollo Elektrik*, began as an improvised guitar melody and was inspired by the images and sounds of Caribbean Colombia. robertolopez.ca

10. Le Vent du Nord 'Adieu du Village'

Vital players in Québec's prog-folk movement, Le Vent du Nord deliver

energetic and uncompromising music which they describe as 'the modern sound of tradition.' Here is the story of Pierrot escaping death at the gallows thanks to a timely rope malfunction. leventdunord.com

11. Boogát 'El Gato Rumero'

Mexican-Canadian musician Boogát mixes modernity with traditional Latin music, skilfully conjuring the vintage sounds with the zeal of the hip-hop generation. Here he delivers a playful tale about a rebellious rumba-loving feline. boogat.com

12. Gypsy Kumbia Orchestra 'Maskarada'

GKO present themselves as an 'explosion of music, dance and circus,' fusing Caribbean-Colombian rhythms with global musical styles. Brimming with parping brass and frenetic percussion, 'Maskarada' is a popular staple of the orchestra's powerful live shows. gkomusic.com

13. Nomadic Massive 'Peppapot'

This legendary Montréal collective are a multilingual crew that celebrate global music with hip-hop as the main medium of expression. 'Peppapot', taken from *Times*, reflects the band's diversity, melding cultures, talents and styles in a cohesive and decidedly contemporary blend. nomadicmassive.com

14. Élage Diouf 'Boulma Sori'

Diouf's music subtly weds pop, blues, folk and West African *asikò*. Sung in his native Wolof, 'Boulma Sori' is a celebration of the human bond that unites us all. elagediouf.com

This album is brought to you by Mundial Montréal, in collaboration with Société de développement des entreprises culturelles (SODEC) and the Québec Government Office in London.

MUNDIAL
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Québec 

WHAT'S NEW

Views, news and events from around the world

A VISION OF SUSTAINABILITY

Since 2019 scientists at the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research have been analysing tour data supplied by Massive Attack with the aim of providing an achievable way for the music industry to align its energy use with the Paris Agreement's 1.5 degrees climate target. Their results have now been published as 'Roadmap to Super Low Carbon Live Music'. Here's a quick breakdown of their suggestions:

Energy use in buildings and outdoors

Venues are to use renewable energy; energy-efficient lighting and sound equipment; outdoor venues to phase out diesel generators

Road/train travel

Plan tour routes in a way that minimises travel; use electric vehicles to journey between venues

Air travel

Avoid flying if possible; eliminate private jets

Audience travel

Offer incentives to fans who travel by public transport; better bike storage at venues

Shipping

Limit air freight for equipment; rent staging and equipment locally where possible

The Afghan women's orchestra Zohra, with members of Geneva's Orchestre du Collège



Afghanistan silenced

Music in Afghanistan ground to a halt when the Taliban took over Kabul on August 15, returning the country to their rule. On that day, musicians from the all-female Zohra orchestra were rehearsing at the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM) in preparation for a tour, but when they heard that Taliban fighters were closing in, they swiftly departed, many leaving their instruments behind. The fear is that the Taliban will restore policies from its previous period in power, 1996-2001, when music was banned and women were barred from education, employment and suffered many other restrictions of their human rights.

The ANIM was founded in 2010 by Ahmad Sarmast (pictured, above right) in response to the end of the previous Taliban regime. It was the only music school in Afghanistan, allowed mixed gender classes and saw its students tour the world, with Zohra performing at the World Economic Forum (pictured, main image) and across Europe. At the moment, ANIM is occupied by the Taliban, who have turned the classrooms into dormitories, though thankfully no damage has been done to the instruments as of yet. Sarmast, who was with family in Australia when the Taliban took power, has been advised not to return. Speaking of the situation he says, "the girls of the Zohra orchestra, and other orchestras and ensembles of the school, are

fearful about their life and they are in hiding. We never expected that Afghanistan will be returning to the stone age."

There is still uncertainty over how strict the Taliban will be in regard to music. They have stated that cultural activities will be allowed as long as they don't go against Sharia law or Islamic culture, with their spokesperson, Zabihullah Mujahid, telling *The New York Times*, 'music is forbidden in Islam... but we're hoping that we can persuade people not to do such things, instead of pressuring them.' Initially, music has been banned from being performed in public spaces, and many are hoping this statement means that private performances will still be allowed and that musicians themselves will not be persecuted. However, fears of this not being the case have been exacerbated by reports that folk singer Fawad Andarabi has been killed by the Taliban, with Andarabi's family backing up those claims.

Clearly still in shock about the sudden change in power that has left his school in tatters, Sarmast says, "we're all shattered, because my kids, they've been dreaming. They had huge dreams to be on the biggest stage of the world. All my students had been dreaming of a peaceful Afghanistan. But that peaceful Afghanistan is fading away."

Courtesy World Economic Forum/Greg Beadle

WHAT'S NEW

Michalis Demetriades



They're not all cancelled

Musicport Festival is offering respite for all those still needing their festival fix this year. Cyprus' Monsieur Doumani (pictured), the duo Catrin Finch & Seckou Keita, Hungary's Muzsikás and Québécois progressive folkers Le Vent du Nord will descend on Whitby Pavilion in October.

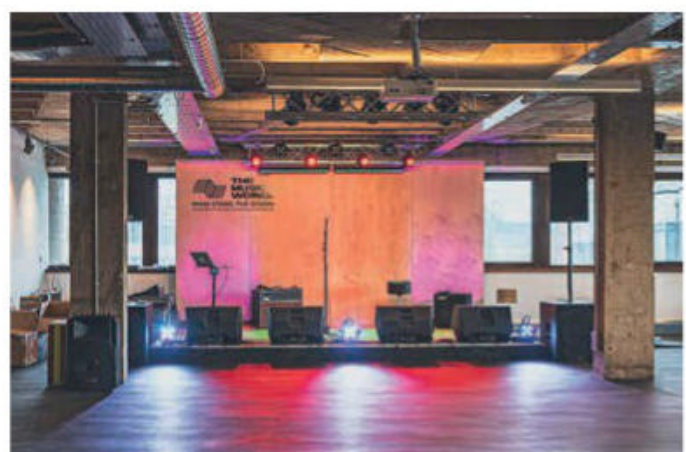
+ DATES Musicport will be October 22-24



West African bird boon!

The Birdsong Project, who have previously remixed birdsong from Latin America and the Caribbean to raise money for the conservation of those same birds, have announced *A Guide to the Birdsong of Western Africa*. Vinyl, T-shirts and prints are available via Kickstarter.

+ ONLINE bit.ly/birdsofwestafrica



Opportunities galore in Gloucester

Gloucestershire charity Music Works have opened The Hub, their new studios and performance space. Music Works provides facilities and training for young people from diverse backgrounds to make music. "Young people in Gloucestershire will now be able to grow their interest and experience with music," says CEO Deborah Potts.



Guess who's back?

Utrecht festival Le Guess Who? have revealed their full line-up for their next edition. It's an eclectic affair with Romani singer Mónika Lakatos, synth *raga* innovator Arushi Jain (pictured), female *zar* group Mazaher, Pakistani singer Arooj Aftab and Touareg band Etran de L'Air just some to feature.

+ DATES Le Guess Who? will be November 11-14

NEW RELEASES

Here are a few of the new albums we'll be reviewing in the next issue.

Ballaké Sissoko (pictured)

A Touma

The latest solo album from the prolific Malian *kora* player Ballaké Sissoko. Out now.

Amythyst Kiah

Wary + Strange

Promising new voice in American roots music with a new album, including standout single 'Black Myself'. Out now.

El Búho

Natura Sonora

British producer and former Greenpeace campaigner releases his latest, a set of imagined journeys into nature. Read more about El Búho on p32. Out November 5.

Benoit Peverelli



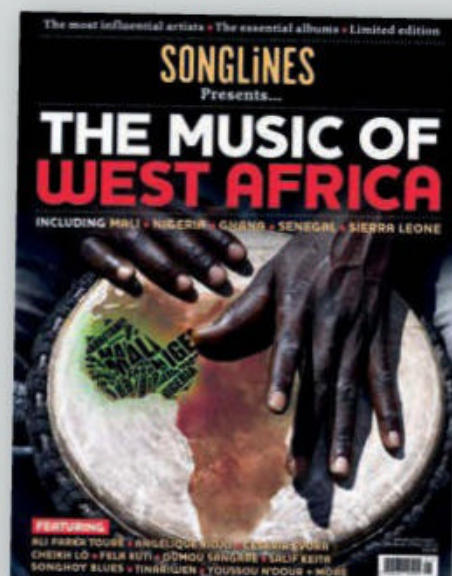
West African special hits the shelves

Here's a fun fact: did you know that West African artists have featured on our front cover more than any other region – 50 and counting? That's what our much-missed previous editor Jo Frost reveals in the introduction of our brand new special one-off publication, *Songlines Presents... The Music of West Africa*, which is on sale now.

West Africa is certainly one of the world's musical heavyweights and this publication is full of articles and reviews about the region, with specially-commissioned exclusive pieces on politics and human rights in West Africa, as well as our contributing editor Nigel Williamson taking

you through the musical history of the region's countries, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo, with Touareg music given its own richly-deserved slot. It's chock-full of recommendations, from superstars like Angélique Kidjo, Youssou N'Dour and Cesaria Evora to up-and-coming artists to discover. If you're a fan of West African music or simply want to know more, then we've packed our 20+ years of experience writing about that very subject into this special publication.

+ BUY magsubscriptions.com/the-music-of-west-africa





AMERICAS

US: Bennie Pete, bandleader and sousaphone player for the Hot 8 Brass Band, has died from sarcoidosis and COVID-19 at the age of 45. Hot 8 and Pete became emblems of rejuvenation and positivity following Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.

Brazil: Songwriter Toninho Geraes is preparing a case against British singer Adele amid allegations that her song 'Million Years Ago' plagiarised his composition 'Mulheres'.

EUROPE

UK: Folk musician and singer Michael Chapman has died at the age of 80. Chapman began releasing music in 1969 but was 'rediscovered' in his later years by a new generation of US musicians and continued to record and tour.

Switzerland: The Nexus orchestra performed a short imagining of Beethoven's hypothetical *Tenth Symphony* dubbed 'BeethovANN Symphony 10.1', which used AI to complete notation that Beethoven left behind.

AFRICA

Ethiopia: Alèmayèhu Eshètè, star of the *Éthiopiennes* series and known as the 'Abyssinian Elvis' or 'Ethiopian James Brown,' died in September. You can read a full obituary of Eshètè on our website at bit.ly/esheteobit

Nigeria: Known as 'Guitar Boy' due to one of his most famous songs, Victor Uwaifo has passed away at the age of 80. Uwaifo had his first hit in 1965 and remained an important figure in Edo culture until his death.

ASIA

China: The country's internet watchdog has issued a plan to curb excessive fandom, stating, 'there needs to be a limitation of irrational star-chasing.' This comes after fans online posted plans to break popstar Kris Wu out of prison.

Sri Lanka: Sunil Perera, frontman of the band The Gypsies, has died at age 68. Pereira and his band performed *baila* music and were hugely popular from the 70s through to the present day.

PACIFIC

Papua New Guinea: Research published in *Frontiers in Psychology* has identified two disparate communities, the Oyda in Ethiopia and Yopno in Papua New Guinea, as using 'name tunes' defined as 'short one- to four-second melodies that can be sung or whistled to hail or to identify for other purposes.' These are thought to be the only communities in the world that still use melodies as opposed to their name, to identify someone.



The world comes to Canada

After a virtual event in 2020, the annual gathering Mundial Montréal will return to the material world (albeit in hybrid fashion) for this year's edition, which will take place over four days from November 16. Since coming to life in 2011, the festival has established itself as not only one of Canada's most important world music events, but one of the most important in North America. As well as showcasing international artists, and the best global music that Canada has to offer, the festival has always been strong on promoting

Indigenous Canadian music. This year's line-up will feature Puuluup's inventive Estonian folk, Swedish Sámi artist Sara Ajnnak and Turkish *ud* player Mehmet Polat (pictured left). There will also be plenty of Canada-based artists to choose from, a sign of the country's diverse immigrant population, including Hungarian *kora* player Sophie Lukacs and Taraf Syriana, an ensemble dedicated to sharing Syrian music.

+ LISTEN Hear music from Québec's diverse artists on this issue's bonus CD, *Global Sounds from Québec*, compiled by Mundial Montréal, see p9 for details





Muhsin Akgun

WHAT'S NEW

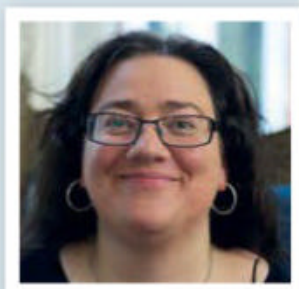
Accolades for Aynur and Global Music Match

Kurdish singer Aynur Doğan is the recipient of WOMEX's much-coveted Artist Award this year. Aynur, a Kurd and an Alevi, was born in Turkey and is currently exiled in Amsterdam. WOMEX state that they gave the award 'for her long-term dedication to the preservation and innovation of Kurdish and Alevi culture, for maintaining the highest artistic integrity in the face of political pressure and, in doing so, for being a model for all that sing against the silencers.' Aynur's last album was 2020's *Hedûr: Solace of Time*, the first she recorded since moving to the Netherlands. Aynur says of the award, "I am honoured to dedicate this award to all women in the world in the presence of Kurdish women who are fighting for freedom, equality and peace."

The other major winner at the WOMEX Awards was Global Music Match, who won the Professional Excellence Award for creating new ways for musicians to promote each other and establishing professional networks in spite of the pandemic. So far there have been 172 artists involved in the initiative, which set up pools of like-minded artists promoting each other's work via social media. WOMEX applauded Global Music Match for 'creating, at such short notice, a new and innovative platform that has already seen long-lasting and tangible benefits, for celebrating musical diversity, and for being a source of optimism and comfort to musicians in a time of great struggle.'

+ DATES WOMEX will take place from October 27-31 in Porto, Portugal. Aynur will perform at the Barbican on November 14 as part of the EFG London Jazz Festival

Roman cups runneth over



There can be no doubting the commitment of Scottish songwriter-turned-academic Mary Ann Tedstone Glover (pictured),

who is set to release *The Music of Ancient Rome*, an album that claims to reveal 'the secrets of ancient Roman music for the first time in almost 2,000 years.' Glover had long found it frustrating that, despite some labelling their music as ancient Roman, no-one had actually done the research to find out what it would have actually sounded like, and she set herself the challenge of achieving just that. She found out where the music would have been played, what kind of people would have

played it, what harmonic ideas existed at the time and which instruments would have been favoured, using paintings, engravings and texts by the likes of Plato and Xenophon as guides. This led her to decide on a street music format of *tibia/aulos* (a double-reed instrument) and lyre alongside percussion and vocals.

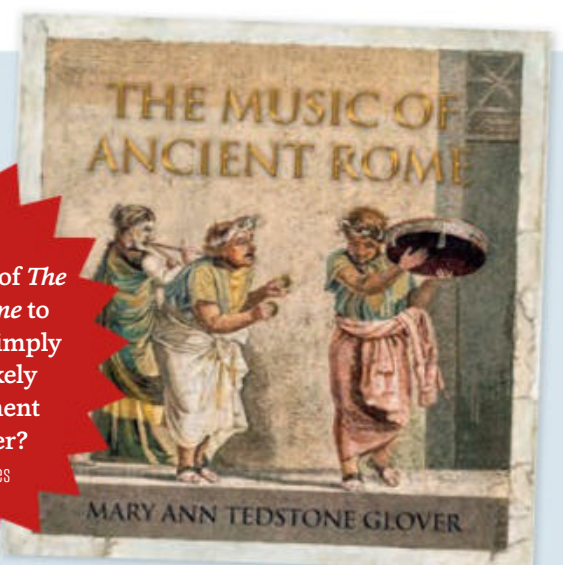
Most intriguing of all was her discovery of the rattling cup as the percussion instrument of choice; this has led her to believe that many ancient Roman cups may actually be musical instruments. If only they weren't too valuable to be rattled for us to find out!

The album has been produced with no synthetic sounds to be as faithful as possible, and features the vocals of Papagena, who

WIN

We have three copies of *The Music of Ancient Rome* to give away. To enter, simply answer: What unlikely percussion instrument did Glover discover?

See p23 for competition rules



supplied medieval-style a cappella to the *Lord of the Rings* soundtrack, although an Oxford University lecturer asked them to tone down their Latin pronunciations, which he felt were too ornate for the street music being played, highlighting the project's commitment to authenticity.

+ ALBUM *The Music of Ancient Rome* will be reviewed next issue

WHAT'S NEW

OBITUARIES

Lee 'Scratch' Perry (1936-2021) *The Jamaican record producer and singer*

The death of Lee 'Scratch' Perry at the age of 85 marks the end of an era for popular music. Through the production methods he developed during the 1960s and 70s, Perry indelibly changed the way that music was recorded and disseminated.

Perry was raised in a remote village in north-west Jamaica. His mother practiced Ettu, a Yoruba form of communication with departed ancestral spirits, installing a belief in an interactive spirit realm that Perry maintained his entire life. Those divine voices eventually directed him to Kingston, where his approaches to producer Duke Reid resulted in his lyrics being used without permission, prompting a shift of allegiance to Clement 'Sir Coxsone' Dodd, who would shortly form Studio One. Between 1961-66, Perry recorded dozens of sides for Dodd, brought Toots & the Maytals to his attention and worked as an uncredited co-producer with organist Jackie Mittoo.

Perry scored a big hit in Jamaica with 'People Funny Boy'. The song's off-kilter rhythm, inspired by a pocomania church service, helped reggae come into being. Then, after the success of 'Return of Django' brought him and his Upsetters band to the UK to tour, Perry worked with Bob Marley & the Wailers



pliponyphotography

between 1969-71, totally transforming their sound. In 1973, Perry opened his own Black Ark studios, where he helped develop dub through experimentation with reverb, echo, delay and other effects. The studio was also the focal point for a radical subset of the Rastafari faith, but while working with The Congos, Perry had a breakdown and underwent a dramatic transformation. He became the wandering nomad who produced music of varying quality, his stage shows ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous.

Since the mid-1980s, his work with Adrian Sherwood was marked by consistently high standards. He also released strong work with producer Mad Professor, his US touring band Subatomic Sound System and Daniel Boyle. We are unlikely to encounter anyone remotely similar again.

DAVID KATZ

Read the full obituary online at bit.ly/leeperryobit

Barthélemy Attisso (1945-2021) *Orchestra Baobab's charismatic lead guitarist and co-founder*

Guitarist and lawyer Barthélemy Attisso has passed away in Togo aged 79. From the beginning he was one of the defining musicians in Orchestra Baobab, both in their initial incarnation during the 1970s and 80s and with their rebirth in 2001.

Attisso was born in Togo and went to Dakar, Senegal in 1966 to study law but needed to work at night to pay for law school. He bought a book and an electric guitar and taught himself at home, listening to guitarists from Zaire (now the DRC), Django Reinhardt, BB King, Wes Montgomery and Carlos Santana. A couple of years later he joined the Star Band, playing mainly Afro-Cuban music at the popular Miami Club. In 1970 he was one of three members of the Star Band poached for the resident band at the new Club Baobab. Attisso made many of the

arrangements and his sparkling guitar solos that swirled and spiralled were a distinctive part of Orchestra Baobab's sound.

Baobab became one of the most successful bands in West Africa until the mid-80s

when Youssou N'Dour's more contemporary *mbalax* started to dominate the scene. They called it a day and Attisso resumed work as a lawyer in Togo. But in 2001, with their archive recordings having become popular across Europe – particularly *Pirate's Choice*, a reissue of recordings from 1982 – World Circuit's Nick Gold persuaded the band to reform.

When he got the call, Attisso said, "no problem, I'm coming." But after more than a decade without performing he found he could no longer play. "I was afraid that I'd lost all that God gave me, but practicing every night till 2am, I managed to get my fingers back." With a number of vocalists in the band, the contrasting personalities of instrumentalists Attisso and Issa Cissokho on sax really stood out. Cissokho (who died in 2019) was flamboyant and attention-seeking, while Attisso was reserved in appearance but psychedelic in his playing. He retired from the band and returned to Togo before they recorded their most recent album in 2017. But Baobab classics like 'On Verra Ça' and 'Bul Ma Miin' with their delicate firefly phrases and fuzzy baselines are inconceivable without Attisso.

SIMON BROUGHTON



Youri Lenquette

Nobesuthu Mbadu (1945-2021)

The South African mbaqanga singer and Mahotella Queens vocalist

As a young girl, Nobesuthu Mbadu sang and performed Zulu dances in Durban's Umkhumbane Township and was still in her teens when, in 1964, record producer Rupert Bopape invited her to join a new vocal group called the Mahotella Queens (pictured, with Nobesuthu Mbadu far left).

Teaming up with Hilda Tloubatla and Mildred Mangxola, the trio provided the joyous close harmonies behind the deep, 'groaning' voice of Simon 'Mahlathini' Nkabinde and the lilting guitars of the Makgona Tsohle Band.

The style was called *mbaqanga* and Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens swiftly became South Africa's most successful group of the era with hits such as 'Orlando Train', 'Uyavutha Umlilo' (Music Inferno), 'Sengikala Ngiyabaleka' (Crying and Running Away) and 'Kazet' (Gazette).

More than merely Mahlathini's backing singers, Nobesuthu and the Queens were integral to the group sound with their unique harmonies and central to the act's appeal on stage with their thrillingly inventive dance steps. At the height of their fame, the trio disbanded to start families, but reunited in 1986 to record their first international album, *Thokozile*, followed

by *Paris – Soweto*, a set of powerful re-recordings of Mahlathini and the Queens' biggest hits of the 1960s and 70s. Their traditional swinging, township style also found a new audience as they toured the world,

performing at 1988's celebrated 70th birthday tribute to Nelson Mandela at London's Wembley Arena, and at Glastonbury and various WOMADs.

Mahlathini died in 1999 and, after a period of mourning, the Queens struck out on their own. Nobesuthu continued singing with the group until ill health forced her retirement in 2017. One of her final recordings with the Queens was on an album by the South African rapper Cassper Nyovest. "She was very quiet, very meek and humble," her family said on her death. "But on that stage, she came alive." *Lala ngoxolo* (rest in peace).

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



Mikis Theodorakis (1925-2021)

Greek composer who waged wars of words and music against a military junta



Greek composer and orchestra conductor Mikis Theodorakis has died after lengthy illnesses. Many will know him as the composer of several film soundtracks (*Z*, *Serpico*, *State of Siege* and the overplayed *Zorba the Greek*), but for Greeks he was the master of *melopoiisi* (setting of poetry to music), often, though not exclusively, drawing on the work of Leftist poets.

Theodorakis' most famous melopoises were settings of poems by Odysseus Elytis ('The Axion Esti'), Giorgos Seferis ('Epifania'), plus communist Yiannis Ritsos ('Epitafios') and Pablo Neruda ('Canto General'). Other notable song cycles include the *The Ballad of Mauthausen* (1966) with lyrics by playwright Iakovos Kambanellis, and *Thalassina Fengaria* (1974) with Nikos Gatsos. Distinguished vocalists for these original versions were Grigoris Bithikotsis and Maria Farantouri. For his obvious political sympathies and participation in the wartime

resistance, Theodorakis was imprisoned, tortured then exiled by a royalist government in 1947, first to the remote island of Ikaria, then to the notorious Makrónisos island prison camp (1948-1949). Later he was arrested and jailed by the fascist junta that ruled Greece between 1967-74, and the playing of his music forbidden. After international outcry, he was released to house arrest in the Peloponnese (1968-70), and then into exile to Paris during April 1970, where despite poor health Theodorakis agitated effectively against the junta. After periods as an MP during the early 1990s, he returned to composing, resulting in his final but noteworthy albums *Erimia* (2005) and *Odyseia* (2007). His older music animated anti-austerity protesters during Greece's 2010-16 financial crisis.

To capture Theodorakis' meaning for his countrymen, I quote my fellow music writer, George Pissalides, who grew up under the junta. He used to play Theodorakis on a small turntable inside a closet, with overcoats muffling the sound lest denunciation-minded neighbours heard. "He kept us all alive during those dark times," he told me simply.

MARC DUBIN

FOLK FOCUS

What's happening in the folk world

The folk scene has always had a strong connection to the natural world. It is a love affair that has seen the stunning landscapes of the countryside and coastlines endlessly inform folk song and inspire musicians. It only seems fitting, then, to highlight some of the recent environmentally-minded folk releases and campaigns for this special climate crisis edition.

First up is a new release from Scottish musician **Ingrid Henderson** (pictured). *Message in a Bottle* is a celebration of Scotland's coastlines born out of a multimedia project commissioned by NatureScot for the Year of Coast and Waters. It offers an artistic contemplation of the environmental impact we're having on the coasts and marine life. There is a stunning animated video for the album's title-track (bit.ly/ingridvideo), and the album will be reviewed in the next issue.

As Glasgow prepares to host the climate summit COP26, grassroots project **Let it Grow** has invited artists, community ensembles, choirs and anyone else interested in lending their voice to offer creative responses to the climate emergency as part of the campaign **#MusicforCOP26**. Having launched with the release of the collaboration 'Enough is Enough' with **Karine Polwart, the Soundhouse Choir** and **Oi Musica** last year, the project aims to create a movement, focusing attention on the issues at hand. The co-director of Oi Musica, Olivia Furness, says, "this is as much about coming together and getting creative as it is about building awareness and political pressure."

O'Hooley & Tidow released a new single, 'Chimneys, Moors & Me', to celebrate the launch of the South Pennines Regional Park. This newly-penned song is the 'theme tune' for the proposed alternative enclosure covering a large swathe of Northern England. Of the song, Belinda O'Hooley says, "nature



Somhaire Macdonald

is so important for your mental health and well-being – and it became even more beneficial during lockdown. It made us take a closer look at what's on our doorstep."

Catriona Price, one half of **Twelfth Day** and a founding member of **Fara**, has addressed the issue of climate change, not only with both of her groups, but also her solo project, *Hert*, a piece commissioned by Celtic Connections. Read more on p85.

And of course plenty of folk artists are continuing to lend their voice to Music Declares Emergency including **Sam Lee**, **Sam Amidon**, **Elephant Sessions** and **Peggy Seeger** to name just a few. Music may not be able to fix the climate, but the folk world is certainly making a lot of noise. Let's hope those headed to Glasgow in November are willing to listen.

Ingrid Henderson releases an album in response to the human impact on Scotland's coastlines

UPCOMING GIGS AND TOURS

We excitedly welcomed back our Gig Guide last issue and it's been a joy seeing the slow return of live music to our venues. With international artists still facing numerous travel bans and COVID-related difficulties, the majority of live music happening in the UK is by homegrown artists like **Fisherman's Friends**, **Oysterband** (pictured), **Siobhan Miller**, **John McCusker** and more. See the Gig Guide on p91 for more details and tours.



Jonathon Cuff

CURRENT FOLK RELEASES

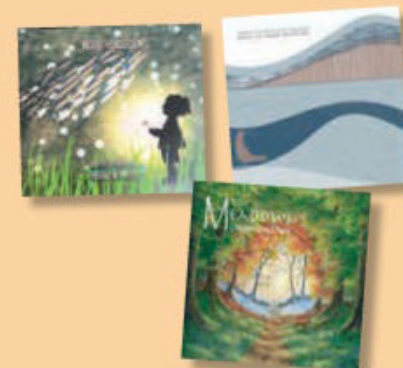
Here's our pick of the some of the best folk albums reviewed in this issue:

1. **Broadside Hacks** *Songs Without Authors Vol 1*, a Top of the World on p60
2. **HEISK HEISK**, Scottish disco-infused trad reviewed on p58
3. **Naaljos Ljom** *Naaljos Ljom*, earthy Norwegian folk reviewed on p59
4. **Various Artists** *Fire Draw Near: An Anthology of Traditional Irish Song and Music*, reviewed on p61
5. **Various Artists** *Stand Up Now: Songs from the Landworkers' Alliance*, reviewed on p61

FORTHCOMING RELEASES

Keep an eye open for these folk and roots albums, all to be reviewed in the December 2021 issue, out November 12:

1. **Fraser Fifield** *Piobaireachd/Pipe Music*
2. **Ingrid Henderson** *Message in a Bottle*
3. **The Meadows** *Dreamless Days*
4. **Karine Polwart & Dave Milligan** *Still as Your Sleeping*
5. **Various Artists** *In the Echo: Field Recordings from Earlsfort Terrace*





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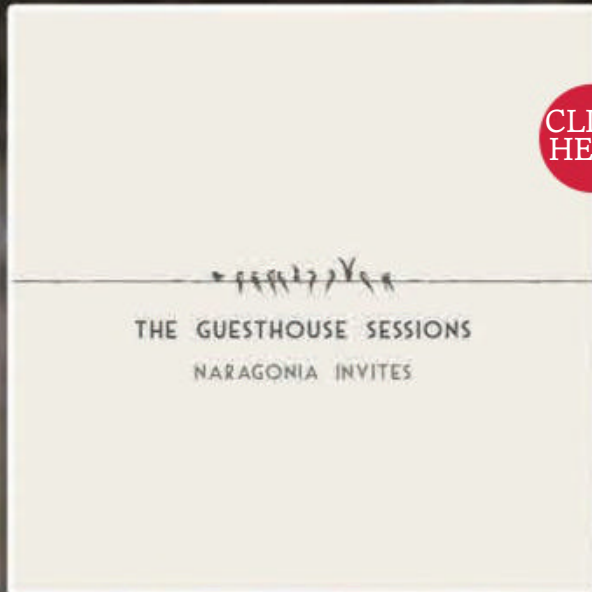
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SPOTLIGHT EarthPercent

A new charity is seeking to enlist the music industry in an eco-sustaining enterprise. **Russ Slater** speaks to Adam Callan, director of EarthPercent

There is a certain cunning behind EarthPercent, a new charity asking the music industry to give a cut of their profits to environmental causes. The notion sounds simple enough, but the reason it could work is because the industry is already well set-up for this type of endeavour.

Adam Callan, EarthPercent's director and co-founder (pictured), explains: "When you account a tour, or publish royalty accounting, there are always several stakeholders who have a share of that revenue stream. The idea is we can take the systems already present in the industry and try to address the fact that not enough money is being funnelled to environmental work, and at the same time harness some of the community-building and awareness-raising power that the industry has."

To entice the industry, they've taken a novel approach, assembling a team of environmental experts who have identified five specific areas on which their work will focus, including the environmental impact of the music industry, climate justice and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. All the money they raise will then go to these five

areas with a charity, also selected by their experts, representing each of the areas. "We found that there are people in the industry who would like to do something. They would either like to change their behaviour or they'd like to be part of the change, or support some charities working on this, but it's not always clear where to give the money," says Callan.

A registered charity since last year, they have so far announced four founding donors: Coldplay, Fraser T Smith, Merck Mercuriadis and Brian Eno, whose initial donations will cover the running costs for at least the first year, ensuring that the money from any further contributions will all go directly towards the causes. A committee full of music industry professionals and ambassadors such as Sam Lee will provide extra know-how and influence to ensure they can make a difference.

EarthPercent see themselves as part of a community of like-minded organisations, each with their own way of addressing climate change: Julie's Bicycle and their pioneering work aiming for an arts and culture industry with a net zero carbon footprint; Music Declares Emergency through

their music-focused campaign and media work; and Live Green and A Greener Festival who work tirelessly to make live music and music festivals, respectively, as sustainable as possible. "We feel we're forming a united front in the industry," declares Callan.

As to their goals, Callan says, "we'd like to be able to announce 30 artists signing up who are in that upper bracket economically who can afford to give a small percentage of their income. That would be significant." The aim is for the charities, which will be announced soon, to be receiving money through EarthPercent by the first quarter of 2022.

With so many musicians suffering post-pandemic, how does Callan see EarthPercent's role? "We've got to get the money from the people who can afford it, and then provide support to everyone else to figure out what to do. Hopefully EarthPercent can be a shorthand in the environmental space for people knowing it's a good place to give. We'll have to earn that reputation, but we feel we've set up the foundations well in that respect." ♦

+ ONLINE earthpercent.com

INTRODUCING...

Dongyang Gozupa

The Korean group are turning the power trio on its head, using tropes of their national music to make genre-splicing sounds, as **Jim Hickson** reports

At its best, the power trio is one of music's most elegant formations. Each aspect of the trio leans on the others while pulling equal weight, filling the sonic space without any extraneous elements. Seoul-based Dongyang Gozupa are a perfect example – even if their set-up turns the standard trio on its head.

Dongyang Gozupa are Jang Dohyuk on a personalised drum-and-percussion kit, Ham Minhwi on bass guitar and Yun Eunhwa on *yanggeum* (hammered dulcimer). Unlike standard power trios, Dongyang Gozupa don't orbit around a singer. This removes the focal point of the listener's attention, and serves to highlight the importance of each musician. Their full message is delivered through instrumental sound. "When one conveys an emotion, such as loneliness, joy, love or even rage, there are times when one cannot express that emotion in a word or phrase," they state. "We try to create an emotional narrative that connects with as many people as possible."

While they paint with emotions, their musical style defies easy explanation. They don't anchor their music around any particular genre, but draw from many streams. For Jang, genres aren't the point: "Rather than wanting to create something that the world has never heard before, we just want to create something fun, which incorporates the tastes and references of each band member." This includes elements of prog-rock and *gugak* (traditional Korean music), hints of metal and industrial, all tinged with the avant-garde, making a sound that can be dark and dissonant while still retaining a playfulness.

It's those spicy dissonances that give Dongyang Gozupa their signature sound. Rather than shying away from

moments of discomfort, they embrace them as a fundamental part of the sonic environment, a necessary tension to balance the consonance. "Personally, I don't think that dissonance is wrong," says Ham. "This all-or-nothing, right-or-wrong thinking makes creative vision very narrow. It's the same with dissonance. If a note does not fit in a particular place, repeating that note can create a special kind of psychedelic effect." And that can take a piece to a different place entirely.

The group's identity and philosophy can be seen in microcosm in Yun's *yanggeum*; it is rooted in tradition without being bound to it. Her instrument was specially-made – it literally has her name on it. "I wanted to express myself with a *yanggeum* that was a little more spectacular and dynamic." Hers has many more strings than the smaller *gugak* version,

offering a much wider range of both tone and style. Yun also plays with two sticks rather than one, and uses effects pedals to alter the sound. Spectacular and dynamic indeed – adjectives that extend to the whole group.

The past decade has seen a truly electrifying new wave of artists using Korean folk and classical music to discover new directions and meanings in sound – think Jambinai and Black String – and Dongyang Gozupa can surely claim their place among them: a perfectly-weighted power trio with an intricately balanced sound. ♦

- + **DATES** Dongyang Gozupa will perform as part of K-Music on October 22-23 at the Coronet Theatre in Notting Hill and showcase at WOMEX in Porto, Portugal (October 27-31)
- + **LISTEN** Hear the track 'Spirit' on this issue's covermount CD, track 12



Mélisande [électrotrad]

Mark Sampson meets the Québécois group's core duo to discuss their captivating blend of French-Canadian trad and club-friendly electronics

This Québécois duo from near Montreal label themselves and their music as 'électrotrad.' Mélisande and her husband Alexandre de Grosbois-Garand come from quite different musical backgrounds. Despite the flourishing French-Canadian traditional music scene, Mélisande admits that "when I met Alex, I didn't know anything about traditional music." The singer-songwriter's background was "more in the prog-rock scene." She lived in Boston for five years, sang with the art-rock band The Sweepers, and even studied guitar with King Crimson's Robert Fripp. Nevertheless, the pair's first album, *Les Métamorphoses*, won her a Canadian Folk Music award for traditional singer of the year. "So I felt I belong and I'm accepted. I had been seen on the scene," she quips.

Having studied electric bass and musical arranging, de Grosbois-Garand played bass and flute for several years with the celebrated Québécois trad band Genticorum. However, he says, "as a bass player, I was into bass grooves and wanted to get into electronic music." Ironically, the wooden flute has become his main instrument and the practicalities of playing multiple instruments on stage mean it's easier to play basslines on a synthesizer. "I also manage the computer," he laughs. The band's principal arranger has long enjoyed the crossover between traditional and electronic music, citing Scandinavian acts like Hedningarna and Garmarna as particular influences. Increasingly, though, he has gravitated towards the electronic music of such acts as Trentemøller and German house duo, Booka Shade. "The traditional part of our repertoire," Mélisande adds, "is the traditional songs that we arrange and wrap around electronic music. We actually wanted to record laments at



Jeff Malo

WIN

We have three copies of Mélisande [électrotrad]'s *Les Myriades* to give away. To enter, answer: What was the name of their debut album? See p23 for competition rules and deadline



first, but came back to our first love in shows, which is making people dance."

They also attribute their shifting sound to their 'secret weapon,' producer Gabriel Ethier. "He's like the George Martin of the band," de Grosbois-Garand suggests. "Our original sound engineer was more rooted in traditional acoustic music," whereas Ethier is more versed in electronics. He's currently finishing off the duo's imminent new album, *Flash de Mémoire*, which follows on from their 2019 album *Les Myriades*. For the first time, the new album was recorded at their home and with entirely new lyrics to some of the traditional songs that have always served as their staple diet. "With this album," de Grosbois-Garand enthuses, "we wanted to do like a non-stop dance party, from first song to the last." Their image has also changed accordingly, with wacky,

futuristic plastic designer-costumes.

"You know, I'm a mother and maybe I was becoming, not boring but a bit... dull," Mélisande confesses. "It was natural to want to express myself on stage." De Grosbois-Garand elaborates: "We wanted to kind of shake things up, break some walls with trad music."

The prospect of touring again is becoming increasingly feasible, which means taking their children with them. "Our son helps us do the set-list and he did some break-dancing on stage with us at some shows," the proud father laughs. The future's bright, then, and Mélisande [électrotrad] indeed seem set to 'break some walls.' ♦

+ VIDEO Watch the animated video for their track 'Ti-Pétard Allard' at www.bit.ly/ti-petard-allard

+ LISTEN Hear the track 'Tapetipetap' on this issue's bonus CD, track 7



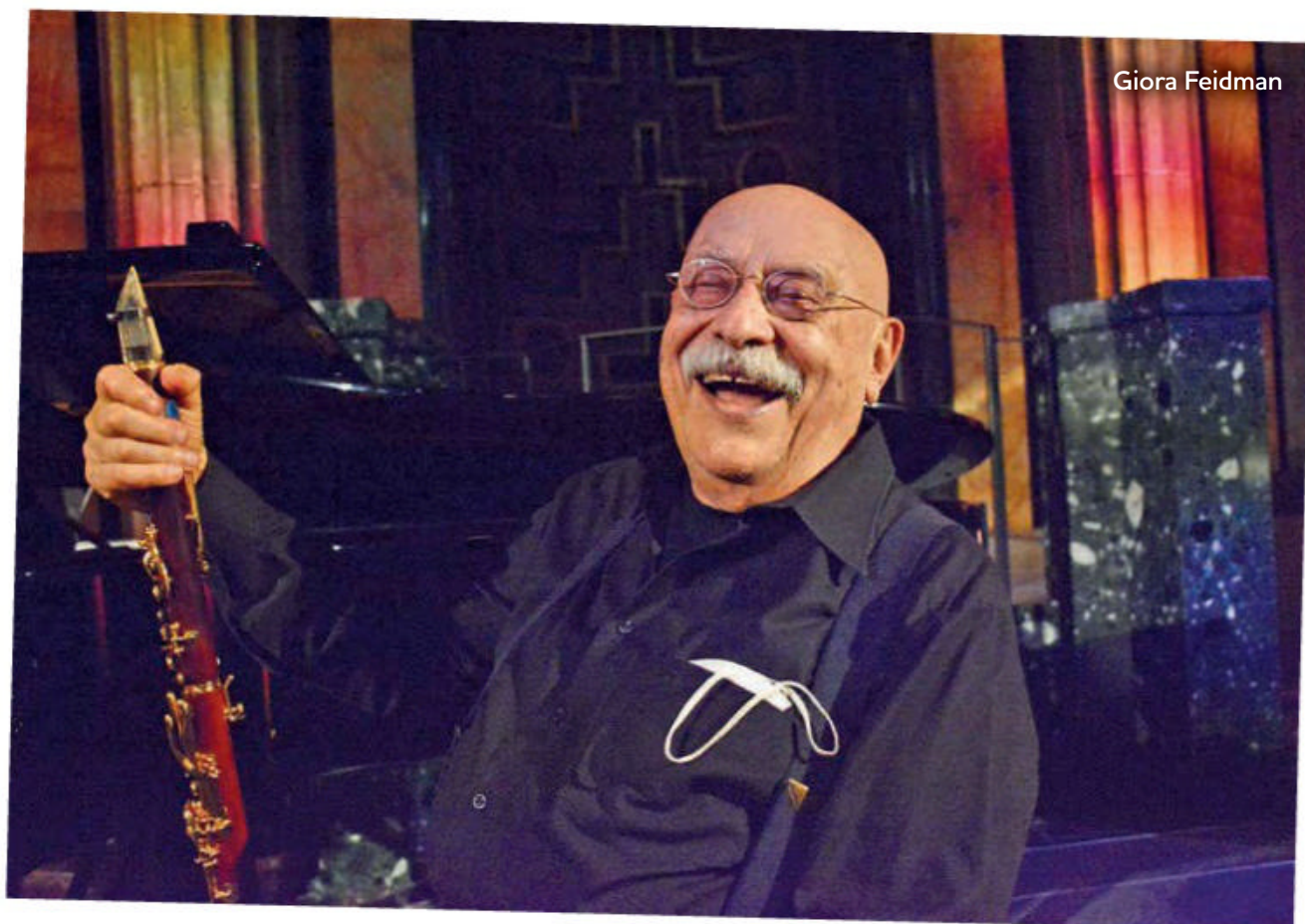
SIMON SAYS...

While in Germany, **Simon Broughton** catches up with the klezmer clarinetist Giora Feidman before his concert at Görlitz Synagogue

Last month I was lucky enough to meet up with klezmer clarinetist Giora Feidman. He's a fourth-generation klezmer musician but has never been part of the genre's revival. He's always been a solitary figure pursuing his own instinctive path with a stunning tone and clarinet technique. He was certainly one of the people that first got me interested in klezmer music over 30 years ago. "The real meaning of klezmer comes from two Hebrew words – *klei zemer*. The translation: instrument of song. All of mankind are born singers. This is a natural force. To express this natural force we need one instrument. We are the instruments of song." This is what he said rather enigmatically when I filmed him for a BBC television documentary in 1992.

I hadn't seen him since the filming session – although alongside Itzhak Perlman he has since featured on the soundtrack to Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, made many records and done dozens of tours, mainly in Germany. So, while in Görlitz recently, I see that he is doing a concert in the synagogue and arrange to meet him. I unfortunately cannot make the concert, but I am able to go to his sound-check that afternoon.

Seeing him sit on stage, he seems very frail – he is 85 after all. His playing seems tentative and cautious. But he is just testing the acoustics and listening to the sound. Once he gets going, his fingers start flying and the notes come pouring out with the wonderful swoops and slides that characterise his playing. Much of his playing is silky smooth, but it's the harsher rasps, croaks and laughs that stand out and make you feel that his music is coming directly from his soul. One human being to another.



Giora Feidman

Simon Broughton

His Görlitz concert sold out in just two days – although under current restrictions they can only seat 160 rather than 360 people. "I feel totally at home here. There is such a close connection between the Jewish and German people," Feidman says with such passion and authority that I hesitate to refute it. "Given the history, how can you say that?" I ask. "I can't explain it, but I feel it, despite everything that's happened," he says. "And it's something that we need. If you listen to the soul, there will not be a war." He has a very congenial personality and laughs a lot when he's talking.

Giora Feidman was born in Argentina to a family that emigrated from Bessarabia, now Moldova, a country with a rich Jewish musical tradition. He moved to Israel in 1957 aged

21 and joined the Israel Philharmonic with whom he worked for 18 years. He moved to New York for his solo klezmer career – but aside from the burgeoning klezmer revival. Whereas they took inspiration from the musicians that brought the music to the US before World War II – Naftule Brandwein, Dave Tarras and others – Feidman delved into sometimes rather cheesy Israeli repertoire and Argentinean tango. He is now back in Israel.

In Görlitz, Feidman has Astor Piazzolla, klezmer pieces and the spiritual 'Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen' on his set list. It is a typical Feidman mix. He sees these pieces as fulfilling his role as a klezmer musician, an instrument of song, being a "channel for sound, for music and for love." ♦



Next Issue...

December 2021 (#173)

On sale November 12

Sona Jobarteh – We speak to the Gambian *kora* player ahead of her Barbican concert about her forthcoming album

Béla Fleck (pictured) – The king of banjo returns for his first album in over 20 years!

Purbayan Chatterjee – The Karnatic *sitarist* rounds up some high-profile friends for a cross-cultural journey

The Beatles and India – Exploring the Fab Four's love affair with the music of India and the lasting legacy left behind

Amsterdam Klezmer Band – Looking back over the group's impressive 25-year career
Introducing... *Sitarist* Tommy Khosla and São Paulo collective Thiago França presents A Espetacular Charanga do França



Alan Messer

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READER PROFILE

ROY BANTON, HULL



HOW DID YOU FIRST DISCOVER SONGLINES?

A few years ago, looking for an alternative to *fRoots*, in the magazine rack in Virgin Records, Nottingham.

WHAT'S ON YOUR STEREO?

Mainly vintage blues, Cuban music such as Omara Portuondo, klezmer collections, Touareg rockers Tinariwen and lots of North African music.

FAVOURITE ALBUMS?

The Shin's *Eg Ari*; Taraf de Haïdouks' *Dumbala Dumba*; Hoyt Axton's *Fearless* and Ry Cooder's *Chicken Skin Music*.

FAVOURITE NEW ARTISTS?

Leonid & Friends (a Russian covers band specialising in early US jazz-rock), as well as Kasai Allstars and VOLOSI.

FAVOURITE GIG?

I'm 78 so there are many, including Youssou N'Dour; Orchestra Baobab; Muddy Waters; Dexy's Midnight Runners.

WORST MUSICAL EXPERIENCE?

Dire Straits at the NEC Birmingham in the late 80s. It was like watching a bunch of puppets through the wrong end of a telescope in an audience akin to a cult.

If you would like to be our next Reader Profile, please email us your answers and a picture to letters@songlines.co.uk

Out with the in crowd

In his soapbox [August/September 2021, #170], Chris Moss claims the cool guys and gals shun the mainstream music, failing to accept that David Byrne, Bowie and Lou Reed were and are the mainstream, and not very cool either. I'm guessing he thinks Paul Simon and Peter Gabriel are mainstream and – who knows – maybe John McLaughlin and Weather Report too. John Coltrane was incorporating Indian music before The Beatles started using Indian instruments as their latest novelty, but I suspect he thinks John and George were outside the mainstream too. Rock from the 50s (I think he meant to add 'roll') and 70s punk (I think he meant to add 'rock') were and still are similarly hyped all over the media.

There will never be level-pegging for black or minority music until the mainstream stops peddling punk rock, Bowie and The Beatles myths as if they

aren't the dominant hegemony and claiming it's fans of ABBA, boy/girl bands and the *X Factor* who accept whatever the media throws at them.

Steven Tulip, Durham

Same old labels

In Russ Slater's interview with Arushi Jain [October 2021, #171], it was refreshing to see an artist calling out the music media for mislabelling them. Jain states, in no uncertain terms, that she is not an Indian classical musician translating the form for a modern audience. Rather it took two elements of her musical personality to create the sound she's been celebrated for.

The idea that modern songwriting and production techniques are simply a way of updating traditional music is a notion that most fans of world or fusion music should be well past – when Tinariwen picked up electric guitars they didn't just popularise Touareg, they instigated a whole new genre –

and yet so often artists are defined more by their traditional leanings than by their ability to innovate and express those aspects of themselves through modern methods.

Ophelia Forde, London

World class

A big thumbs up for Edd Bateman and the crew at World Music Method. This new immersive method of live sessions is bringing much joy and really working for me. It gives access to both an ongoing programme of lessons and to past and upcoming prerecorded sessions. The teachers are all inspirational as musicians and instructors, and very responsive to the needs of us learners, from less experienced students to more seasoned instrumentalists. And thanks to *Songlines*. I would not have known about the courses without you and over many years you have provided much food for the soul.

Geoff Carter, Dyfi Biosphere

More wonderful access to fabulous music from Africa courtesy of Songlines

From Jon Snow (@jonsnowC4)
in response to our *Songlines Presents...*
The Music of West Africa

The team at @SonglinesMag have introduced me to so much great music over the years. My horizons have been expanded

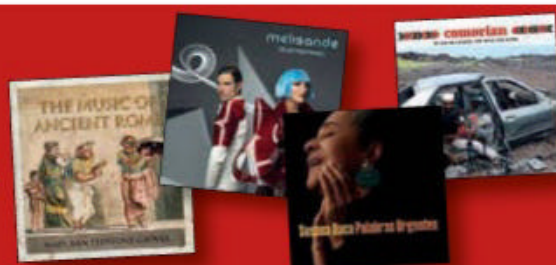
From @julian_gibbs

Amazing to have received the printed copy of @SonglinesMag September issue [#171], where I'm appearing in the What's New section with bossa Whatfather Roberto Menescal

From Muca (@Muca_Music)

WIN

The album *The Music of Ancient Rome* by Mary Ann Tedstone Glover **13** ♦ *Les Myriades* by Mélisande [électrotrad] **21** ♦ Susana Baca's *Palabras Urgentes* **29** ♦ Comorian's *We Are an Island, but We're Not Alone* **83**



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Jon Snow, Channel 4 news presenter

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SUSANA BACA

MAMA PERU

For five decades Susana Baca has been performing plangent protest songs in the name of South America's marginalised peoples, the poor and the planet. On the eve of the release of her latest album, *Palabras Urgentes*, the Afro-Peruvian diva talks to **Chris Moss**



Susana Baca might have been as famous as Aretha Franklin, Dionne Warwick or Diana Ross if she had been born in the US. She has a voice to melt butter, has filled theatres in Lima, New York and Havana, and delights jazz, folk, Latin and world music fans equally with songs that splice Indigenous instruments and socially engaged lyrics – which she often writes herself. But being Peruvian – and Afro-Peruvian at that – she belongs to a culture largely invisible to the Anglophone world and marginalised in Latin America.

Peru was slow to discover her; she and her husband created their own label, Pregón, to release her early albums in the 1980s – on cassette, as vinyl was hard to come by. International recognition only came in 1995, with the inclusion of her cover of ‘María Lando’ on the Luaka Bop compilation *Afro-Peruvian Classics: The Soul of Black Peru*. Her debut solo album for David Byrne’s label followed in 1997. Since then she has scooped up three Latin Grammy awards and is widely recognised for her contribution to the preservation of Afro-Peruvian music. In 2011, she became the Peruvian minister of culture, the first person of African descent to occupy a cabinet post. This month sees the long-awaited release of *Palabras Urgentes*, her first LP for Real World Records. “I have always wanted to release an album with Real World,” she says, “having previously only recorded one song for them on an album entitled *Gifted: Women of the World*. I feel a strong bond with the UK.”

But her deep and lasting bond is with South America’s marginalised Indigenous groups and minorities. At 77, she remains a tireless campaigner for social justice; the word ‘urgent’ in the title of the new album – in production since before the pandemic – alludes to the political graft and grievous economic inequalities that characterise Peru’s dysfunctional version of democracy. “I was aware of a feeling of anger and a sense that people felt betrayed and damaged by corruption. We chose these people and we believed them. There is a feeling that this cannot go on. Peru has been terribly polarised by fraud and impunity.”

“Now the pandemic has stripped us naked and has exposed the corruption of those who have taken advantage of the situation. People have lost jobs, livelihoods, work, families. Artists have been unable to tour. The situation is critical.” The one positive: “The demand for music is there because the people need it after all this death and sickness.”

Baca spoke to me via a particularly shaky Zoom connection from her home in Cañete, on the Pacific Coast about 160km south of Lima. From other interviews I’d read with her, I knew it was typical for conversations to veer away from music and towards bigger social and political themes – but, in fact, there is no line separating these for Susana Baca.

She was raised in an illustrious musical family in the poor Chorrillos district of Lima. A close friend during the 1970s was Chabuca Granda, the composer of ‘Fina Estampa’ and ‘La Flor de la Canela’ and a pioneering defender of Afro-Peruvian culture. Parents and mentor alike taught Baca that education was the only reliable means of escape, or enlightenment; in 1989-1991 she undertook a series of research trips with her husband (now manager) Ricardo Pereira to study Afro-Peruvian music and collate songs.

“I discovered many things on those trips. I discovered what hadn’t been unearthed by textbooks about national identity written by experts in black Peruvian culture. All the things I’d read were removed from what I saw when taking my own journey and getting to know people in their everyday lives, realising that being black was not only about colour, but about a way of adapting. This was fundamental in my career.”

“The other fundamental lesson those journeys gave me was to discover Peruvian identity had an African connection not only linked to colour – which placed it alongside Chinese and Japanese Peruvians – and showed it to be intimately interwoven with Andean culture. That had not been apparent before. Nor had the Spanish roots of Afro-Peruvian culture been properly detailed in academic works. For me it was heartening to be ▶

Baca performing in the US in 2019



black and feel I belonged among Peru's poor classes, where black, Chinese and Indigenous people form their own community – one that I had never seen in that way in anthropological and sociological works. Black urban culture has had its moments, and has had more visibility even than Andean culture, but rural Afro-Peruvian culture, which is linked to the Andean, has been marginalised and made largely invisible.”

The trip turned Baca into a serious and passionate researcher (she and Pereira went on to establish an institute of experimental dance and music) and deepened her understanding of Afro-Peruvian reality. Her music is a direct expression of this, blending Andean melancholy, Spanish notions about melody and beat-driven rhythms (*festejo*, *landó* and *golpe tierra*) that skip between Africa and Latin America, usually played on traditional Afro-Peruvian percussion instruments including *cajón*, *quijada* (made from a donkey's jawbone), *guapeo* (clay pot), cowbells, congas and bongos.

Baca is often compared with Cesaria Evora – and not only because they both like to perform barefoot – but a key difference is the way the former's music freights a joyous energy, even when the songs tell of suffering and heartache. “Art has healed my deep wounds,” she says. Thus her song ‘Lamento Negro’ – the title-track from her prizewinning 2001 album – opens with a heartrending story, gently told, of a life sacrificed to slavery, and culminates with a frenzied dance rhythm and a *grito* (cry) that claims to have killed off slavery.

Over the ten songs of *Palabras Urgentes*, we find Baca still fighting the good fight, exploring emotions that underlie and connect suffering and resistance. In her introduction to the album she writes: ‘Age casts a different light upon the world and this album seeks to express freely and honestly those things that I love most intensely. It is time to stop thinking of always having to please others and deliver an album truly from the heart.’

It was recorded at home in Cañete, with Baca cooking for the musicians and producers present. Diverse rhythms, drawn from Argentina and Puerto Rico, underpin ballads, *nueva canción*-style folksongs and uptempo percussion-led blasts, as the singer pays homage to individuals and peoples that inspire her.

‘La Herida Oscura’ is for Micaela Bastidas, an 18th-century Indigenous rebel leader and martyr for Peru's liberation from Spain (this year marks the bicentennial of Peruvian independence). It was written by Chabuca Granda. Another song, ‘Juana Azurduy’, honours a famous woman warrior of the Bolivian war for independence. For Baca, history provides the vital link to a feminism Peruvian women have yet to fully discover. “I sing to [Azurduy] full-heartedly. We need more leaders like her. These trying times in which we now live demand combative women willing to risk it all to give us our freedom. We need new freedom.”

Another track, ‘Negra del Alma’, she says, “is not a song, it's an encounter between my heart and the winds and popular rhythms of the Andes.” The song considers the Indigenous gaze and how it falls on black Peruvians.

Baca has included covers of an Argentinian *milonga* (‘Milonga de Mis Amores’) and of the famous tango, ‘Cambalache’ – a sardonic portrayal of a corrupt society as a ‘junkshop’ that never changes its shoddy stock. “I do with tango what was done with it when it started,” she says. “Tango





is a protest, it wasn't invented to please, but to say something, to provoke. 'Camabalche' is a protest song, bearing truths that time hasn't changed but has in fact made more firm and solid."

"The milonga is a rhythm that I love to hear and share with Argentinian musicians. In Buenos Aires, and in most books, the African presence in the city is denied, even though, like Lima, Buenos Aires was a black city in the 1800s. Music is proof of this, and in Argentina the African element is mixed in with all the other rhythms that evolved there."

A seasoned educator revealing stories we overlooked or thought lost, Baca is still capable of surprises. 'Dämmerung', which begins a cappella and segues into a melancholic reverberating piano, stands apart on the album, as do its lyrics – by poet Luis Hernández, who killed himself in 1977 – about a sorrowful, mist-shrouded dusk.

On the plangent, almost funereal 'Vestida de Vida', Baca addresses global warming. Of course she does; she has never shied away from the big issues, and the industrial destruction of the Amazon forest and the emptying of Peru's seas are the 2021 equivalents of the military dictatorships and five centuries of abuses perpetrated by the landowning classes.

She insists that "nothing has changed" in Peru since she started exploring and performing the Afro-Peruvian songbook. "Peru is still a country where corruption is almost a legacy that comes from feudal Spain, where lords and gentlemen didn't pay taxes and commoners did. It'd always been the case of the corrupt and well-connected versus those who lacked any kind of 'in' road. I called this out, in strong language, when I was young, and the audiences were small. To carry on doing it now at the age of 77, to live it all over again, to say the same things, is a way of showing my life hasn't been lived in vain. That's why the words are urgent. They haven't changed their meaning; some melodies change, but the essence is the same."

Baca credits the album's freshness and energy to the Real World production team, in particular Michael League – the leader of New York-based ensemble Snarky Puppy. She first came across League years ago, when he was playing guitar in a university band that did covers of her songs. They eventually

met in 2015 and Baca contributed to Snarky Puppy's 2016 album, *Family Dinner: Volume Two*. League, along with Jeff Coffin (saxophonist) and Fab Dupont (audio engineer) stayed with Baca for ten days while producing the album.

League is gushing in his admiration for her work and legacy. "I've learned more about the purpose of music from Susana than from anyone else. She's the most soulful singer I've ever heard. She sings with her entire spirit. She shows you what a singer is supposed to be, the essence of being an artist. Susana is not faking it, she's just trying to express the truth inside her."

He says Baca and Ricardo gave him a precise brief. "They wanted to touch the African roots of Peru. They wanted a kind of raw, simple aesthetic. After all the record is called Urgent Words and the intention was to put the message first. We wanted to leave a lot of space for her, not to produce ear-candy with lots of bells and whistles. The lyrics are very important.

With Susana it's all about the words."

When I mention the range of genres and tempos on the new album, League demurs: "I don't think that what's impressive about Susana is her range or versatility, but the truth she expresses in a single note. I'd be happy to hear her sing the same song every day for the rest of my life."

If this sounds like hero-worship, we might bear in mind that the recording sessions were also a non-

stop family-style fiesta, with Baca cooking chicken dinners for everyone involved, delaying sessions while she took perfect Peruvian *causas* out of the oven to feed the crew. Somehow, it seems, she can be a diva and earth mother at the same time as playing the roles of hostess and mama.

As for Baca deserving even more attention than she currently gets, League thinks the honours and big label releases will always fall short. "When you're making art at the level Susana is making it, you could never give someone enough recognition. She is a pure artist. She sings with intention, she has a message – and that's probably how music first began. Everyone who has met her and knows her work is in awe of her." ♦

+ ALBUM Susana Baca's new album, *Palabras Urgentes*, is a *Top of the World* review this issue, see p52

"The demand for music is there because the people need it after all this death and sickness"

*“While I was theoretically looking for pythons,
in the evenings I would record different types of music...”*

David Attenborough reflects on his time filming *Zoo Quest* between 1954-1963

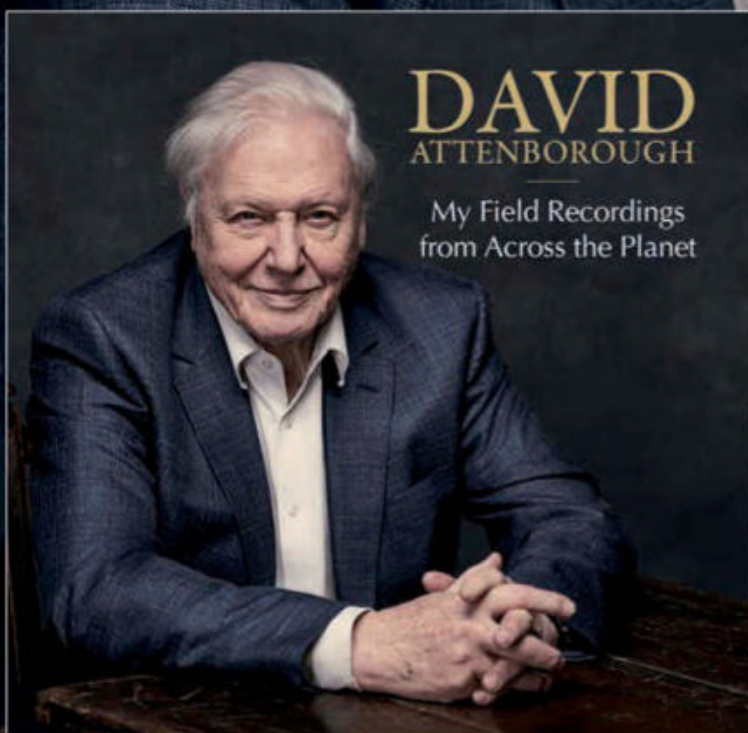
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Music & the Climate Crisis

Small Island Big Song: ngupakarti



Before the world's leaders convene in Glasgow for the 26th UN Climate Change Conference, **Chris Moss** introduces some of the global artists who are committed to tackling the impending ecological catastrophe

Protest music responds well to immediate and tangible issues. The climate crisis is a different kind of challenge. Its causes lie deep in two centuries of industrialisation – and float in the air, invisible, microscopic, global. A degree more or less of heat, here; a dammed river, a new power station, over there; everything is connected. Its consequences are insidious, too, and complex, flaring up in apocalyptic forest fires and in devastating landslides and floods, ticking along like a planet-sized time bomb.

How do artists react to this past and present? Can music find a language for the likely horrors and ordeals of the future? The following collection of environmental features puts forward a range of meaningful responses.

Norwegian Terje Isungset seeks a bond with nature by collaborating with a Sámi musician, who never lost her connection (p36). Folk musicians in Bangladesh respond directly to their changing environment and extreme weather (p39). The Small Island Big Song project unites musicians from 16 islands across the Pacific and Indian oceans, using art and storytelling to bring home the hard realities of catastrophic climate change (p41). In North America, First Nation artists speak out against the exploitation of natural resources over which their ancestors were once careful and responsible custodians (p34). In Africa, the Nile Project has campaigned to create alliances to save the continent's longest river (p42). In Latin America, a new generation of musicians is creating original sounds and transmitting timely messages about timeless truths (p32).

The sheer diversity of approaches and the myriad musics springing up around the globe perhaps reflect the dizzyingly

vast range of issues we are facing. The climate crisis cannot be disentangled from politics or poverty, from social injustice and historical inequities. All art forms struggled to articulate and denigrate the Holocaust, Hiroshima and other world-deforming atrocities. It was largely left to historians to report the raw facts. Science dominates the narratives about climate change, the environment, fossil fuels. Perhaps that's as it should be, given the squirming and side-tracking of our leaders. But music, with its unique ability to weave dance and ideas, sorrow and joy, into a coherent and uplifting whole, also has a vital role to play.

"People are sick of hearing bad news," says Robin Perkins, aka El Búho, co-founder of activist label Shika Shika, former

Greenpeace campaigner and DJ for Climate Action. "Music has a role in changing society and the world that is often underestimated. That role may not be explicit protest, but music leads people to think about the environment and climate."

We are surrounded by nature and by climate, such that we often take them for granted. We are also drowning in digital news and the

latest data; it's an inhuman task to process all that information, take it on board, act on it. The tidal waves and conflagrations, hurricanes and heatwaves are not our enemies. But sometimes we can feel we're shouting – screaming – directly at a storm, at the very weather itself. Music throws a spotlight on the true wrongdoers, from Bolsonaro to BP, from the conquistadores to the World Bank. It engages us, and enrages us. But it can also be a balm, a space for focus and reflection. The doomsayers might tell you 2021 is no time to dance. But that's another lie. You just have to choose the right partner and a life-conserving song. ♦

The sheer diversity of approaches perhaps reflect the dizzyingly vast range of issues we are facing

Main image: Taiwan's Putad, part of the Small Island Big Song project, see p41

SOUTH AMERICA

Messages from Mother Earth



From Indigenous rap to eco-electronica, Latin American musicians, producers and DJs are transposing trancey birdsong and deep forest vibes into the heart of the city. **Chris Moss** reports

A man made of fire runs through a jungle; the only thing not in flames is his feather headdress. He smokes a pipe. He hunts. He swims, his skin covered in mirrors. ‘*Natives born in the land,*’ he chants in Guarani, ‘*since the 1500s we have been at war.*’ He shimmies through the sun-dappled undergrowth, focused and steely-eyed. ‘*In the old days there were plenty of fruits in the forest,*’ he raps. ‘*But the white man arrived and destroyed everything that God created.*’ He appears in the city, deracinated, dizzied, in the dark.

The video for ‘Xondaro Ka’aguy Reguá (Forest Warrior)’ was edited by a duo called Angry. The singer and actor is Werá Jeguaka Mirim, formerly known as Kunumi MC, soon to be known as Owerá. He looks pretty angry, too, and so would you be if you were a member of Brazil’s Guarani community, brutalised and made landless by the current regime that is turning the country’s fabled wild regions to dust.

“People need to hear and understand the reality that goes on in our villages,” he says. “They need to denounce the violence suffered due to invasions by farmers. People need to hear Mother Earth’s message to learn how to protect her. We Guaranis have Nhanderu, who is our father, and we find strength in the sacred medicines of the forest.”

Mirim lives in Krukutu, at the southern edge of São Paulo, the largest city in South America, famous for traffic jams, helicopters and sprawling breeze-block slums that abut million-dollar apartment blocks. He originally caught the world’s attention when he raised a banner during the 2014 World Cup, demanding ‘demarcation,’ the legal formalising of boundaries. His music straddles the urban/rural frontier, in keeping with his mixed heritage and life on the margins. He has taken the name Owerá, meaning ‘Lightning’, to show that he has moved on from Kunumi (Child). He’s just 20 and has been releasing since 2017. “I think Owerá is stronger and I feel it represents me,” he explains. “When I decided to name myself Kunumi, I didn’t have much idea of what could happen. And today I understand better, I know my road is still long and it’s important to feel happy with the name I’ll carry for so long.”

“When I started composing rap songs it was under the influence of artists like Racionais MC’s and [murdered

Brazilian rapper] Sabotage. Listening to them, I found a purpose to my life: to protest for Indigenous rights through music. I ended up composing in Portuguese, because I wanted a lot of people to hear and understand the message. But, over time, I also decided to sing in Guarani as a way to show that we have our language, and also to bring the strength of my ancestors. So, today I sing in two languages. I am a rapper, always will be. But I’m also a singer of sacred songs.”

Owerá – along with Amazonian artist Kaê Guajajara, Bororo rapper Katú Mirim and Kayapó composer Nory Kaiapó – is part of a small but energised group of Indigenous artists in Brazil who take urban genres and give them an ethnic, environmentalist twist. Listen to ‘I’m Alive’ featuring Caetano Veloso, Criolo and others if you want to hear how cheesy and awful eco-campaign music can be. To skew George Orwell’s famous quote about proles in 1984: If there is hope

in Bolsonaro’s burning, bulldozing nation, it will come from the grassroots.

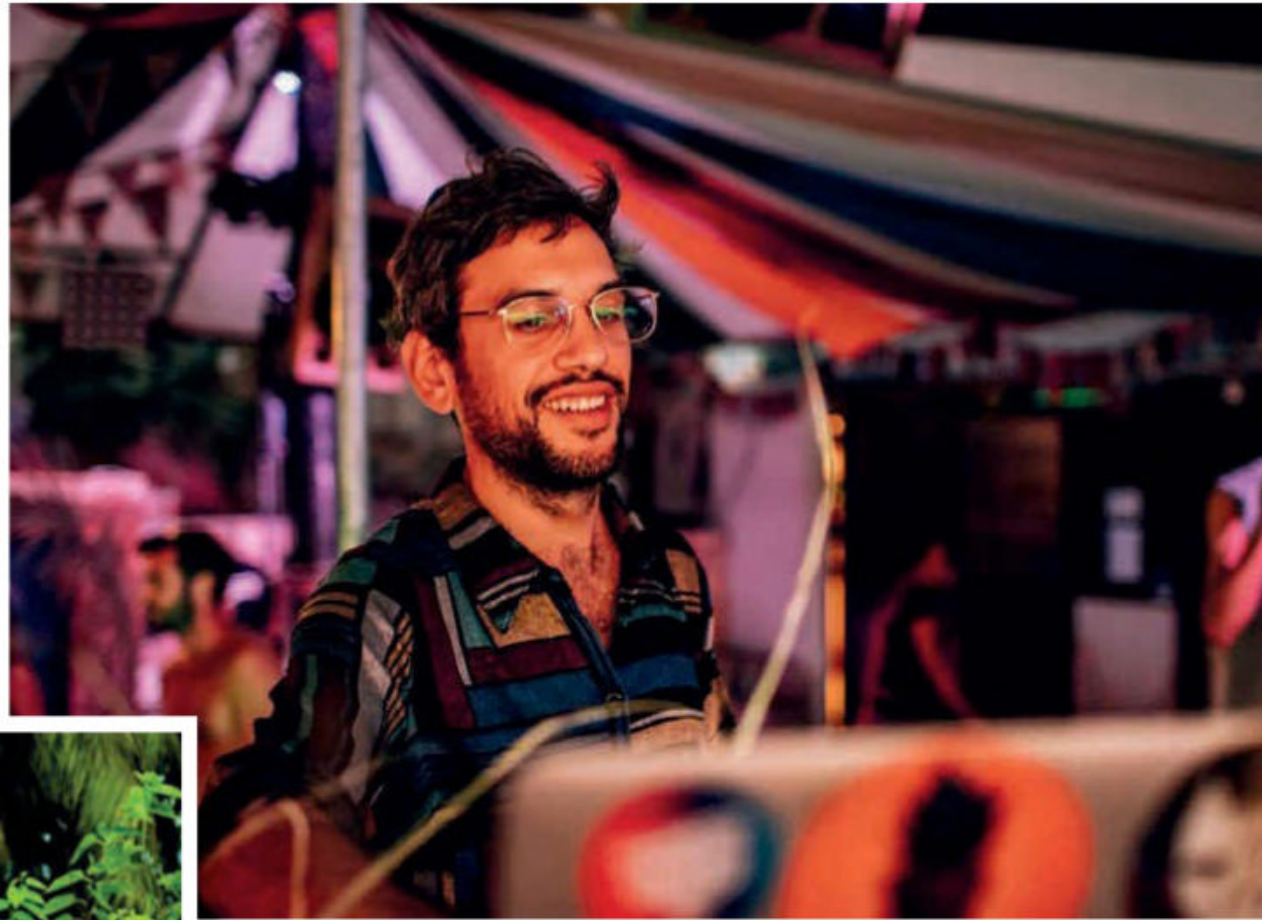
For all that, some white Latin American artists are torn – in a positive sense – between Indigenous traditions and those imported by their own European ancestors, and, arguably, between the metropolis and the interior. Pioneering *mestizo* musicians would include Argentinian

rock legend Gustavo Cerati (listen to his song ‘Raíz’ to get a taster) and Manu Chao, whose ‘Por el Suelo’ is a homage to Pachamama, the Andean Earth Mother, and who has been a vocal supporter of the campaign for justice for murdered Honduran environmental activist Berta Cáceres.

Today, one of the most interesting spaces is the club and EDM. Buenos Aires label ZZK – which takes its name from the Zizek nightclub – has provided a fertile milieu for musicians who want to work out where inherited musics by the likes of Mercedes Sosa, Atahualpa Yupanqui or even Andean pan-pipe street performers can go in the 21st century. Chilled remixes of Bolivian Quechua singer Luzmila Carpio – who has campaigned for the rights of nature as well as Indigenous people – by ZZK’s in-house DJs are just one direction.

In Colombia, Simon Mejía, founding member of Bomba Estéreo, has released eco-focused solo work as Monte. His

“People need to hear Mother Earth’s message to learn how to protect her”



Clockwise from left: Simon Mejía of Bomba Estéreo, who released an eco-centric album *Mirla* as Monte; British producer and former Greenpeace campaigner Robin Perkins (aka El Búho); Argentinian musician Agustín Rivaldo (aka Barrio Lindo) and Guaraní rapper and activist Owerá

2020 album *Mirla* is a stealthy, bewitching fusion of ambient electronica and chants in Indigenous languages and Spanish. The title refers to a species of thrush found in northern South America; Mejia found a dead mirla outside his house and decided to give the bird a burial.

Shika Shika Collective is an artist-led platform co-founded in 2015 by British producer and former Greenpeace campaigner Robin Perkins (aka El Búho) and Argentinian musician Agustín Rivaldo (aka Barrio Lindo). The latter's work is equally at home in the pages of *Songlines* as on indie-oriented sites such as *The Quietus* and *Pitchfork*. Being hard to place or 'genre-busting' is less a wilful act than a by-product of living in a well-travelled world. Born in Buenos Aires and currently based there, Rivaldo spent much of his youth in Colombia and continues to visit and seek inspiration there. "I'm not trying to do folklore, focusing on one instrument and one style and diving into one thing for years," he says. "I'm not trying to do electronica. I like

to take a bit from Brazil, Argentina and Colombia, not just folk music but also contemporary popular music, mix it all up in a salad and find something new. When you hear some folk music or sounds from the natural environment in a nightclub, it changes the whole vibe of the club or the party. If someone hears a folk instrument and goes off to explore that, it's great. For me, it's a dialogue with the roots of my continent."

He says it's important to steer clear of anything modish or tokenistic. When I mention the way some artists in the *nueva canción*/folklore songbook namecheck Pachamama he doesn't exactly bridle, but he does politely demur. "Pachamama is a very sensitive topic. As a concept it's super important, but I don't really like the way it has been used in music – as when someone puts a shaman's vocals over a techno track. It's become a trendy thing, and I associate that with white privilege, and people who can afford tickets to expensive 'holistic' festivals." Perkins agrees: "Pachamama has been co-opted by Californian yoga retreats. I wouldn't dare put it in anything I do."

But cultural conquests travel in many directions. ZZK and Shika Shika, and likeminded labels such as VOODOOHOP in Brazil and Wonderwheel in the US, have made South American native sounds so cool that, as Perkins notes, "in Berlin everybody's making downtempo music with a Latin American feel now." For both artists, music is as much a political act as an artistic venture. "I see music as a tool/weapon," says Rivaldo. "Shika Shika might put us in the spotlight for a moment, but for me it's more about belonging to an underground, and to a community of activists doing positive things, than having a career. Everybody has a part to play in this; we can no longer wait for politicians or others to fix things." ♦

+ MORE Read Chris Moss' guide to the *Essential 10 Latin American eco-tronica albums* on p98

Daniela Vesco; Lizett Diaz; Millaly; ngupakarti

Pipeline Blues

North America's First Nations artists are on the frontline, fighting against the exploitation of natural resources in the land of their ancestors. **Marc Fournier** speaks to some of the artists leading the charge against global ruination

“**T**he climate is not going back. We are past that point. We can't reverse this. The new warmer climate has changed the landscape and our food supply drastically. Inuit people will adapt and continue to do what they have always been doing for thousands of years: eat locally. Less fish or seals perhaps, but we can now think of growing fruits and vegetables!” As I kayak along the Northwest Coast of Canada, these words from Inuk artist Tiffany Ayalik and the realities they depict resonate strongly with me.

Canada's northern regions are warming three times faster than the global average and the impacts are evident. Canada is a country of resources, exploited and exported on an ever-devouring global scale, and this is why the North is now the new mining and fracking El Dorado. Tiffany and her sister Inuksuk Mackay came together two years ago to create the Inuit style throat-singing duo PIQSIQ. In Inuktitut, a *piqsik* is a type of storm where winds blow in a very specific way, making it look like the snow is falling back up towards the sky. Blending ancient traditional songs with eerie contemporary compositions, their celestial voices are crystallised by looping technology when performing live, leaving the listener enthralled in an almost otherworldly atmosphere.

When not performing with PIQSIQ, Ayalik hosts a wilderness cooking show, sharing tips on how to create a feast using wild berries, fish or game from the surroundings, all of them cooked or roasted on an open fire using minimal utensils. She is also a filmmaker and her latest documentary, *Food for the Rest of Us*, tackles the reality of the warming of the Arctic and the effect on the flora and fauna. In the film, Marjorie Ovayuak, an elder Inuk, shares her memories of the land and how “the ground is much more soft now... It never was that soft.” The thawing of the permafrost is a real concern because the permafrost holds twice as much carbon as the atmosphere, and roughly 15% of that stored carbon is vulnerable to being released. It's called the permafrost carbon feedback loop and the consequences can be understood and felt planet-wide. Ayalik sums it up: “Being a non-mainstream artist or musician with any amount of platform, whether large or small, it's important not to waste the chance to talk about something important like the climate crisis. I feel the urgency.”

One thousand kilometres south of the Canadian Arctic lies what is called ‘the tree-line,’ the latitudinal limit where trees start to grow. This is where I reach the legendary Pura Fé, an Indigenous singer-songwriter coming from eight generations



Clockwise from this image:
Tuscarora artist and activist
Pura Fé; Inuk duo PIQSIQ;
Digging Roots (ShoShona
Kish & Raven Kanatakt)

of Tuscarora women singers and musicians. Born in New York City, she later created Ulali, a First Nations women's cappella trio, in 1987. Today, Pura Fé lives in Saskatchewan and one of her missions is to fight the building or enlarging of pipelines carrying crude oil through sensitive and inhabited lands. “I went from tree-line to frontline!” she says, referring to the protest song ‘No More Pipeline Blues (On This Land Where We Belong)’, on which she vocally joins forces with Bonnie Raitt and the Indigo Girls. Released on Earth Day earlier this year, the song supports the ongoing fight against Minnesota's Line 3 tar sands oil pipeline, which cuts through more than 200 bodies of water, including the Mississippi River. The resistance



is heavily led by Indigenous women and Pura Fé is at the forefront. “It’s actually very hard to stop such physical and corporate machinery. But it helps in widening and broadening people’s awareness... It helps to grow courage as well [she used the word *cojones*]. We’ve got to stop this bullying and combat fear. And music is a good tool; it definitely unites. Musicians can make a difference... It’s our job.”

Her song ‘Idle No More’ became one of the anthems of the movement of the same name, one of the largest Indigenous movements in Canadian history, and has been sung in several demonstrations and protest events, including in the frontlines of the People’s Climate March in New York in 2014. One could easily think that Pura Fé is living on the last scent of the 60s revolution. Nothing could be further from the truth. She can be very critical of her own people. “The multinationals, they know what they are doing because they have our people working in mines. I say, ‘OK, you’re still living on your land, but what are you helping do to it?’ It’s slavery! It reminds me of when I went to Mexico City, working on a musical play in the 70s. Who was there, dressed in army outfits with machine guns, raising and folding the flag every day in front of the Palacio Nacional? That same palace in which Diego Rivera’s murals clearly tell the story of the genocide of the Indigenous people? Full blooded Indios raising the flag! That’s crazy!”

In Canada and all over the world, Indigenous peoples are the caretakers of Mother Nature and respect her gifts. First Nations peoples have a special relationship with the earth and all living things in and around it. This relationship is based on a profound spiritual connection that has guided Indigenous peoples to practise reverence, humility and reciprocity. Everything is taken and used with the understanding that what is taken is only what is needed. Great care must be used so that future generations will not be put in peril.

Hailing from Maliotenam in north-eastern Québec, singer-songwriter Shauit sings songs strongly inspired by his Innu roots and traditional music. He fuses several popular genres

“In music and art and beyond, Indigenous peoples are leading the discourse around environmental issues”

(folk, country, rock, reggae) and offers honest, committed songs filled with emotions and personal experiences. Shauit sings in Innu, French and English about the plurality of the cultural mosaic of the First Nations. When I asked him what he thought was the role of First Nations musicians in the ongoing fight against climate change, his answer was simple. “We are storytellers. We’ve known for a long time that the changes in climate are real. But we don’t wear lab coats, so nobody listened to us. On top of that, sometimes people ask, ‘How come there are no recycling programmes on reserves? You are not the caretakers you think you are!’ That hurts. We are not wired

this way. We’ve been using only what we need from nature, for thousands of years. We can even cut a plank out of a living tree to build something so the tree can continue to grow. We don’t know how to deal with surplus, with plastic or glass. It appeared way too recently!” His song ‘Drame Nature’ dramatically states, *‘the Earth is sick but it’s humanity that should go to*

the doctor. Is it really in our nature to denature?’

Echoing the urgency of the situation, Anishinaabekwe artist ShoShona Kish, leader of multi-award-winning band Digging Roots with her partner Raven Kanatakta and recipient of the WOMEX 2018 Professional Excellence Award for her continuing work in empowering First Nation communities and using music as a catalyst for change, speaks to me a couple of days after the release of their new song ‘The Healer’. “Music is a transcendent force. It can stir us and inspire us. Music can move us in ways that transcend language or culture and cut right through to the core of our humanity. We need that right now, especially right now. We collectively face the most serious environmental crisis in human history. In music and art and beyond, Indigenous peoples are leading the discourse around environmental issues in a critically important way. Our communities have retained a deep and intimate relationship with the land and water. Elders are carrying a profound wealth of traditional knowledge and teachings from the earth. This knowledge is essential as we map a path forward together.”

Around the world, Indigenous people have been taking care of that land and singing its wonders. Now they are the witnesses of its disappearance and they keep on singing about it. Perhaps it’s time we finally listen. ♦

EUROPE

Deep Freeze Dynamic

Simon Broughton offers both paws and thaws for thought as he explores the animal spirits of the Northern Sámi and the frozen depths of Terje Isungset's Arctic Ice Music project, which arrives in the UK next month



My Zoom call with Sámi singer Sara Marielle Gaup is unlike any of the many other Zoom calls conducted during the lockdown months. Within a few minutes she's staring at me with fierce eyes saying, "you will listen and try and tell me what is this animal." She starts singing, although it seems like the voice is coming out of her mouth of its own accord, as if she's just the vessel for the inhuman sounds. It pulses forward and back, coming and going and then rises up angrily. A bear?

No, she sings me a bear and it sounds very different. Less angry, more melancholic and rather more tuneful. Then she sings a rabbit, much lighter in tone and actually rather hoppy. The one I'd failed to recognise was a wolf. Which seems totally obvious once she tells me.

Also a member of the Sámi group Adjágas, Gaup isn't keen on the word *joik*. She prefers the Northern Sámi word *luohti* to describe her songs. "The animal luohti are usually good for people not familiar with luohti because they are describing the nature of the animal, the way it moves or the feeling that it gives," she explains. "People know rabbits everywhere so they can recognise it easily in the song. There are also luohti for people and places – like rivers and lakes. They each have their own spirit and energy. We sing the energy of the spirit of the place, the animal or person. Every luohti has this message and it's about nature."

Gaup is speaking to me from her home way north of the Arctic Circle in Fanasgieddi (Båteng in Norwegian) on the Deatnu (Tanaelva) river, which is famous for its salmon and forms the Norwegian border with northern Finland. We're talking about her participation in Terje Isungset's Arctic Ice Music project, which is coming to the UK on tour.

Isungset constructs and plays instruments from ice – and not just any ice. To have the sonic possibilities he requires, the ice can't be made in a freezer, it must be naturally formed and as dense as possible, free from air bubbles and impurities. He has his secret locations in Norway where he gathers it. "I wanted to make a connection with all people living in the

north," Isungset explains while speaking about the project. "All those people are closely related to nature and my ice music is related to nature – 100%."

His line-up includes, alongside Gaup, two Inuit singers from Canada, Akinisie Sivuarapik and Amaly Sallualuk, Tuvan throat singer Radik Tyulyush (from the group Huun Huur Tu), contemporary Norwegian singer Maria Skranes, plus a trumpet player, double bassist and a video artist.

One of the pieces in the set, 'Ocean Memories', was actually commissioned by Greenpeace and there's a rather spectacular video of a performance on Spitsbergen, the main island of the Svalbard archipelago north of Norway. They're on an icy surface on the edge of the ocean with snowy mountains in the distance. The *iceophon* (a sort of glockenspiel), an ice trumpet, an ice drum and even an ice bass glisten in the evening light.

"My music is very much about the climate and the natural world, but I will never write lyrics telling people what to do," Isungset says. "But the concept is so obvious with ice

instruments. If you don't catch the message, then it's not my problem..." He guffaws. "This project is important on many levels," says Gaup. "It's very beautiful music and combines many different peoples together. We're all taking care of Mother Earth and we're taking care of her together."

What surprised Gaup were the similarities she found in the music of very different people, not in the Arctic but in Tuva, in distant Siberia. "Tuvan and Sámi music cultures are really similar. The technique is very different, but the thinking is similar – the way you let the music talk without words. As well as the throat singing they have a different style of singing that is very close to mine. The first time I heard it I was amazed. It really sounded like someone from my village singing. And also, how you can hear the animals in the songs. That's how luohti works as well," she says.

Gaup grew up in a reindeer-herding family in Guovdageaidnu (Kautokeino), the main cultural centre for the Northern Sámi. It's where a big Sámi Easter festival and

**"My people have
been taking good
care of the land"**



Sámi singer Sara Marielle Gaup (far left); Terje Isungset's Arctic Ice Music Project and the protest camp at the Riehpovuotna fjord (below)



joiking competition takes place. Her father is a traditional singer, or *joigi*, while her mother was from the coast where the Sámi culture has been largely lost. "I didn't realise until I was a teenager that this sort of singing is not that common anymore. In many places in Sápmi (Sámi land), the songs are gone or almost gone. I realised as a teenager that I also have the responsibility to pass it on."

This raises concerns about putting a very traditional form on stage and performing what is often a very intimate music to a wider audience. "The *luohti* are not just for entertainment. When you perform for an audience the entertainment part becomes more important. As a traditional singer I always struggle with this, because I feel the song, the message and the communication between me, the *luohti* and the place I'm singing is changing. There are many *luohti* that I never sing on stage as they don't belong there. Only in everyday life... Sometimes you have musicians that are adding something very positive to the song, but sometimes not. Sometimes they are going against the energy that I'm trying to give. Terje is great to perform with, he will always follow the *luohti*, whatever I do."

One of the issues concerning the Sámi and conservationists in Norway is a plan to dump two million tons of copper mining waste into the Riehpovuotna (Repparfjord) fjord. Norway is the only country in Europe that permits the dumping of mining waste into open water. The Sámi fear for the consequences on the reindeer and the salmon in the fjord. A protest camp has been established alongside the prospective site. Climate change issues figured strongly in Norway's recent general election (held on September 13), which resulted in a Labour-led coalition and could change the scenario at Repparfjord.

Gaup hoped to learn a *luohti* for the fjord, but nobody knew one. Close to the harbour town of Hammerfest, Repparfjord is in a coastal area where the Sámi culture has been assimilated. "I wanted to strengthen my relationship with the fjord I was wanting to protect," Gaup explains. "So I went there hoping to 'find' one. I won't say to compose one, because it's not about

me at all. When you do a *luohti* it's about what you're singing. Then I sang it to people from there who have a relationship with Riehpovuotna and to strengthen my own contact to the fjord."

Gaup is softly spoken, but her gentle tones mask a steely strength of purpose. "It's ironic and sad that outsiders say that our land is an untouched wilderness, but that's not the truth. My people have been taking good care of the land so it looks like it's untouched – and that's what we've been doing for thousands of years. Now [these companies] are using that against us and saying nobody is using these places so they can just take them. The most important part of the work that I do is to preserve the traditional singing, because that makes the connection to the land stronger and that's what the colonisers have tried to weaken. In my generation I can see how fast it's weakening, because many of us are thinking more and more like the Western world." ♦

+ VIDEO Watch the video for the Greenpeace-commissioned track 'Ocean Memories' at bit.ly/oceanmemoriesvideo

+ DATES The Arctic Ice Music project tours the UK in November, including dates at Howard Assembly Room, Leeds (Nov 16), Djanogly Theatre, Nottingham (Nov 17), St George's Bristol (Nov 18) and Kings Place, London (Nov 19). For more details, visit www.sounduk.net/events/arctic-ice-music

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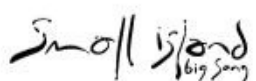


Image: Putad, Amis of Taiwan
Artwork by Jenn Da Costa



ASIA

Weathering the Storm

Bangladesh has been one of the hardest hit countries when it comes to climate change, suffering devastating floods and extreme weather. **Nazmus Chowdhury** traces the folksongs that tell the story



Music has always been an important part of people's lives in Bangladesh. Regardless of the theme of the song, various elements in nature have always influenced our songwriters. A significant number of musicians present nature and climate in a positive way; however, there are also many songs that reflect the influence of mother nature and the adversities it causes in our daily lives. The songs narrate the pain and sorrow caused by floods, river erosion, cyclones and extreme weather. In Bangladesh, 80% of the country is flood plain a metre or less above sea level.

'In the mad wind, the mud candlelight is blowing away. Hey wind, please stop,' sing the group Nogor Baul on the song 'Pagla Hawar'. This famous song has touched the hearts and minds of millions of Bangladeshi youth. It reflects the effects of cyclones and storms in poor communities.

All natural hazards faced due to climate change are either directly or indirectly related to rivers. From upstream to the Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh is blessed with hundreds of rivers, which form the world's largest delta. This has shaped the physical and musical landscape of the country.

Bengali traditional music almost charts a sonic map of the riverine region. The songs originating from the north and midland of Bangladesh use higher notes with fast tempos, reflecting the vastness and fierceness of the Jamuna and Padma (Ganges) river basins. On the other hand, songs and music from southern parts of the country use subdued notes with soft rhythms, reflecting the calmness of the tributaries and canals.

Bhawaiya music is traditionally from the north of Bangladesh and is sung with a two-stringed instrument called a *dotara*. The music often touches on the impact of the river on the lives of people in the region.

The folk song 'O Ki Ore Pagla Nodi' sings, 'oh, mad river. Is this your true nature? You have destroyed our homes and forced us to live apart.' The people living near the Brahmaputra and Jamuna rivers are threatened with floods and river erosion, causing their frequent displacement. Some are forced to move more than two or three times in their life. They are often separated from loved ones for long durations in search of a better livelihood.

Chars, an island feature of Bangladesh's ecosystem, are small islands that develop in the centre of vast rivers, mainly due to erosion and changes in the water's course. They are difficult to access and have little infrastructure. Over the years, these chars have become habitable for economically marginalised people. They are very good for crop cultivation and hence attract large numbers. But they are also prone to flash flooding and erosion, often sending communities shifting from one char to another. One folk song expresses the pain of separation, expectation and hope of a woman waiting for her husband who has left her to travel by the mighty river: 'Oh dear bullock cart driver, can you tell me, how long shall I wait for him to come back to me.'

Another song, 'Shorbonasha Padma Nodi' originally sung by legendary folk singer Abdul Alim, is a classic example of a folk song based on the river. It expresses the emotion of a boatman facing the waterway's malevolence and destruction: 'Oh, the catastrophic Padma river... Tell me, whether you have no shore, no shore. Oh, you don't have any shore. Oh Padma, after seeing your storm. I am petrified. Please don't kill me in this storm.'

Bangladesh has fought long and hard to combat climate change. We are one of the most efficient nations in natural disaster management. Years of experience with annual floods have taught us how to work with nature rather than try to combat it. Natural flooding, when managed, is in fact beneficial to rice growing, but excessive flooding is becoming increasingly frequent with calamitous surges in 2020 and 2021.

Music can't change the climate, of course, but it can raise awareness for the issues at hand. But what is frustrating for musicians in Bangladesh is that it is action taken by those outside the country – in the developed and developing world – that is changing the climate for the worse. The message needs to reach the wider world. ♦

Bangladeshi folk songs narrate a story of floods, river erosion and extreme weather



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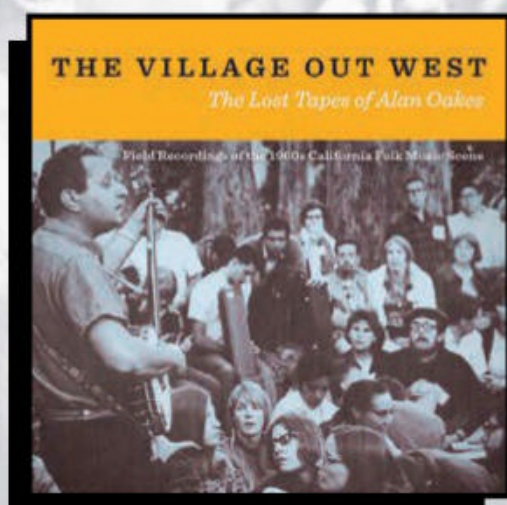
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Sea Change

Jane Cornwell speaks to producers Tim Cole and BaoBao Chen from the Small Island Big Song project, whose latest release focuses on sustainability issues and cultural survival

Producer and filmmaker Tim Cole, was in the desert outside Alice Springs in central Australia in 2014, gazing up at a starry night sky, when his jeep radio began broadcasting results of the fifth IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) report. Things were not looking good.

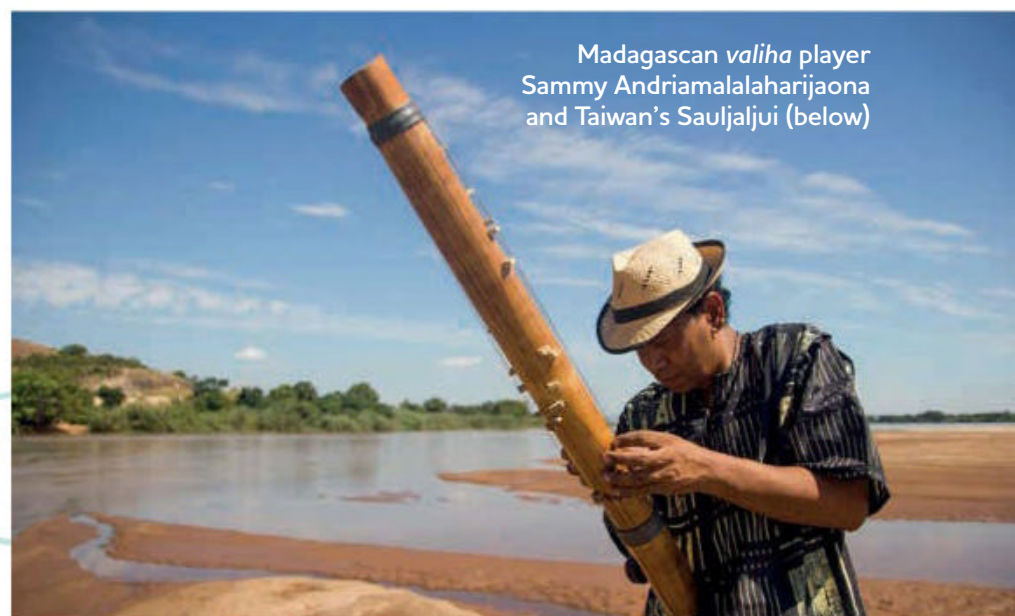
“The steady loss of nature and culture to the Pacific and Indian Ocean regions was enormous,” says the Melbourne-born Cole, a former member of seminal Australian band Not Drowning, Waving, whose collaborations with musicians from Papua New Guinea including George Telek and work for a free West Papua (which remains under Indonesian occupation) were groundbreaking. Cole had been working with Indigenous Australians, recording their ancient songlines (groups of songs that pass down cultural and geographical knowledge and maintain connections and community). At the same time Cole and his partner, Taiwanese producer BaoBao Chen, were finishing a film about female water percussion players in the islands of northern Vanuatu in the South Pacific. “A Vanuatuan elder told us of the ancestry they shared with the Indigenous Taiwanese, whose outrigger canoes travelled from Madagascar to Rapa Nui [Easter Island] and Aotearoa [New Zealand], back over 5,000 years,” says Cole. “It felt similar to the 60,000-year-old threads connecting Aboriginal Australia.”

The IPCC report drove home the need to act fast. Chen and Cole put their belongings in storage and drove out of Alice Springs with just \$5,000 and a grand vision for a multi-platform project titled Small Island Big Song. For three years they travelled between 16 island nations, recording and filming around one hundred artists, finding similarities, celebrating differences. Their eponymous debut won a *Songlines Music Award* in 2019.

Fast-forward to August 2021 and Chen and Cole are sitting outside their A-frame home on an organic farm in the mountains of central Taiwan.

The next phase of SIBS was underway when the pandemic hit and rooted them here, its focus on climate change sharper still; the project’s forthcoming sophomore album features a set of artists living sustainably on small islands, each contributing a song about their lived experience of climate issues.

Most are Indigenous female artists and environmental activists passionate about merging their art, culture and



Madagascar valiha player Sammy Andriamalalaharijaona and Taiwan’s Sauljaljui (below)

message to ensure their cultural survival. “There is Mauritian singer Emlyn, whose NGO combats plastic pollution; she cleans up beaches with kids then teaches them how to make instruments from plastic waste,” says Chen. “And Putad, aka Outlet Drift, an Indigenous Amis Taiwanese artist and surfer who took part in a court case to fight developers ruining her coastline and its coral habitats, and won... There’s the duo Vaiteani from Tahiti, a strong voice for the health of the ocean and its marine life and coral reefs, and spoken word artist and poet Selina Leem of the Marshall Islands, who was the youngest person to speak at the COP21 in Paris. Her piece tells of climate refugees forced to leave their land due to rising sea levels.” Studies find that some of the Marshall Islands will be submerged by 2035 and entirely lost to climate change by 2080.

As producers, Chen and Cole are the project’s linchpins, bringing together artists in collaborations, underscoring the rich diversity of Austronesia and the urgency of its conservation. As with the first project, this one will span a live tour with images, a film and an album due for release in early 2022.

A single, ‘Listwar Zanset’, features said artists singing in Indigenous languages, their singular and island nation voices and cultural and environmental issues intersecting and merging. There is Madagascar’s Sammy Andriamalalaharijaona on *valiha* and the PNG-born, Queensland-based maestro Airileke Ingram on log drums, buoying a narrative that reasserts custody of ancestral birthplaces – and exhorts voices everywhere to rise up and protect the land.

“These songs tell stories,” says Cole of the album, which will be packaged inside an envelope made from tapa cloth and include a booklet of lyric translations. “They take you into the sense of loss and sadness felt about losing these magical environments, and the very real fact that our ecosystem is collapsing around us.” Chen nods. “We also found plenty of joy in the deep-lived love for the land, and an uplifting appreciation for all the people across the world who believe we are part of nature’s delicate web, not the masters of it.”

Their belief in the message is palpable, as is their faith in the power of music to open minds and shift ideas, the ways activist artists can work with policy makers to enforce cultural change on the ground and united, their voices all the louder, at the table. “The planet is in peril,” says Cole. “The cultures this project represents are part of the jigsaw.” ♦

+ **ONLINE** www.smallislandbigsong.com



Small Island Big Song: Millaly ngupakarti

Great Rivers

The Nile and the Niger. Mythical rivers, under severe environmental stress. Musicians have been addressing these issues, but politics get in the way. **Bram Posthumus** reports

Ségou, Mali, riverside. Old creaking lorries park near the place where young men dig up sand from below the surface of the Niger River. They dump the contents of their shovels into one of the *pirogues* (those slender wooden boats so typical of life here) that lie bobbing on the water. Or they take their load onshore and pile the sand up in small mountains from where it is shovelled onto a lorry. Once full, it departs, its engine groaning under the weight. The sand goes to building sites and road works.

This scene repeats itself in every town and city along the river, whose waters are also abused as open sewers. In North and East Africa, the Nile receives the same treatment. But where the Niger River gets undermined, literally, by sand mining, the big issue with the Nile is a dam. Or rather: The Dam. Construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam is nearing completion and once it is full it will be Africa's largest. This is fuelling conflict between Ethiopia and its downstream neighbours, particularly Egypt.

A chance encounter and a historic happening set the mind working of Mina Girgis, an ethnomusicologist with a globe-spanning life story: born in Paris, grew up in Cairo and studied hospitality and ethnomusicology in different parts of the US. The chance encounter was this: "I saw a Japanese friend playing accordion with an Ethiopian band." The kind of musical encounter that can turn a small stream of creativity into a majestic river. The historical happening? "I returned to Egypt during the Arab Spring." And here is another historical twist: those dramatic popular uprisings that became collectively known by that name coincided with the start of the Renaissance Dam's construction.

This cauldron of events and experiences gave rise to The Nile Project. "I wanted to give music a role in exploring community, identity." For most people, the river is a presence. It's simply there. But where it is from or where it goes is another matter. There is some knowledge in Egypt about Sudan, because, as Girgis notes, the countries overlap somewhat. But Ethiopia? Kenya? Uganda?

It's the same story in West Africa. Between Siguiri in Guinea (home to the famous Diabaté family of *griots*, including the golden-voiced Sékouba 'Bambino'), through Mali and into Niamey the capital of Niger, the river is almost universally known as the Djoliba, the Great River. That's an overlap similar to the one Girgis was also referring to. But further downstream,



into Nigeria? Nobody knows. And here there has never been such a thing as a Niger Project to help create conversation, community or environmental awareness around the river.

The Nile Project made an honest attempt to do just that

and it certainly had its moments of triumph. It was accepted and carried by the communities.

"We did not want to appear as one of those UN or NGO funded programmes about HIV or something," comments Girgis.

"This was about building a conversation about the issue of water. And how there is not enough

of it." The project gathered musicians from the countries the Nile touches, as many as possible, from the DRC to Egypt and began an exhilarating creative process. "There is an incredible cultural and musical diversity there," says Girgis. And this diversity had to find its way into the creative process, which would flow into concerts for the people in those Nile communities – and later beyond them – to attend.

**"This was
about building a
conversation about
the issue of water"**



The Nile Project (left) and the river they aim to protect (above). Klub Jeru (right), who released the song 'Black Tide'

The first such encounter was at a place that could not be more symbolic: Aswan, where the Soviet Union built the dam that transformed Egypt. The live performances were, as Girgis says in one word: "Magic. The music distracted from the conversations about the water, which were always political and legalistic and not constructive. We wanted to see how a unique moment, created by music, could carry over into a constructive conversation about water." This proved possible, if only because as Girgis says, "the Nile has so much cultural and spiritual currency."

Just like the Djoliba. Countless songs tell us how the river gives life to the communities living along its shores. But hardly any music concerns itself with the current problems the river faces. Only in two places, Ségou and the Delta, can music be found to be speaking out about the issues. For Ségou-born hotelier, music explorer and producer Kabyrou Dena everything must be connected with nature. His hotel is made from local material and sits on the river. He worries about its fate, just as he worries about the ancient trees that give Ségou its character; they are being cut down for timber. "Seven years from now they'll be gone," he says, and that would be a tragedy. He has created a band, HiniZi, six local musicians who play a wide variety of purely traditional percussive, chord and wind instruments. Appropriately, HiniZi has recorded a song called 'Badji' (River). It is a passionate plea for the preservation of the one thing that gives Mali its identity.

The other place is a good 4,000km downstream, where the problems are inescapable: the Niger Delta. The oil giant Shell has been drilling and spilling oil here since the 1950s. The affected communities have been clamouring for a fair share in the oil revenues and compensation for the fatal pollution of their natural environment. Klub Jeru (aka Ubrei-Joe Jeru) comes from Delta State and recorded 'Black Tide', a deceptively sweet-sounding tune, inspired by a South Sudanese song of the

same name. It is a cry for justice and an end to the horrendous pollution. As Jeru says, "our environment is being mutilated by oil spills and flares, pipeline ruptures... these are robbing my people of their clean water and air, making them sick, poor and desperate. I am singing against the victims being silenced."

Shell's professed innocence ended when a Dutch court condemned the company to the payment of compensation to one Ogoni community for the destruction of their livelihoods by an oil spill in 2009. The company reached a settlement of \$3,300 for each fisherman, poor compensation for the destruction of a life's earnings. As Banning Eyre reported for US public radio, the rapper MC Kay lampooned the settlement in his song 'January Money', which became something of an anthem for the region.

If there is one place from where we can expect more songs and raps and jams and tunes about the river, it is the Niger Delta. The Nile Project, meanwhile, has gone into hibernation. A conscious decision, Girgis explains: "The conditions are simply not there. The political rhetoric is making it hard." The political rhetoric between Egypt and Ethiopia shows that the two countries are implacably opposed. "Music cannot change this," Girgis concludes.

Just like bringing musicians from the different Malian communities together on a foreign-sponsored concert has not brought a solution to the country's multiple violent conflicts, neither will a similar extravaganza do anything about the mounting tensions surrounding the dam. "It will not work because the music is not contextualised. It's just exotic diversity," says Girgis. The people from the communities that are most affected may visit these foreign-sponsored culture events – but they will not own them. And that makes all the difference. ♦

+ SONG Listen to the song 'Badji' (River) by HiniZi from Ségou Mali at soundcloud.com/hinizi/badji

Moving Closer to God

Mark LeVine traces a spiritual lineage between the music of Morocco's Master Musicians of Joujouka and the circuit-bending of a new slew of Arab electronic artists

Herman Vanaerschoot – SOFAM

William S Burroughs said it best. Watching the Master Musicians of Joujouka whip the faithful into an ecstatic frenzy on a warm winter's night in 1972, his eyes focused intently on the leader, Maalam Abdeslam Attar, who controlled proceedings with little more than his breathing and slight shifts of a *ghaita* (double reed horn) melody. 'He has mastered the secret of breath,' Burroughs wrote. 'Perhaps he can breathe music instead of air.'

There is nothing like spending three days in the Ahl-Srif foothills of the Rif mountains of northern Morocco with the Master Musicians of Joujouka, letting their music envelop you: jolt the body, heal the soul. I have been fortunate to experience some of the world's great forms of Sufi trance music, but none have the sheer presence and power of the Master Musicians of Joujouka performing on home ground, metres from the tomb of the brotherhood's founder, Sidi Ahmed Sheikh. This is as it should be; for at least five centuries, psychically distressed inhabitants of the Ahl-Srif have been brought to the village

to be healed by this transcendent music, often spending days chained to a tree outside Sheikh's mausoleum.

Even after the post-war bohemians first heard the musicians performing at cafes around Tangier in the early 1950s, the only way to experience the music is in the village with the full complement of 20-odd musicians surrounding you for hours or even days on end, their percussive polyrhythms and piercing melodies taking over your body and mind – a process Timothy Leary called 'spiritual surgery.'

The importance of presence became apparent when I first listened to *Brian Jones Presents the Pipes of Pan at Joujouka*, the Rolling Stones' guitarist's album recorded in the village in 1969. I could tell there was something special about the music and Jones' production; but even though the recording is remarkably clean and powerful, it is sonically flat – a two-dimensional representation of music that clearly had four (or more) dimensions. What I would realise decades later, when I first heard the group live: it's not just that the musicians breathe

music instead of air, it's that by the time they're done with you, *you* are breathing music. But capturing that experience on record seemed an impossible task – at least until the release of their new album, *Live in Paris*.

Recorded at the Centre Pompidou in 2016, *Live in Paris* by The Master Musicians of Joujouka (not to be confused with The Master Musicians of Jajouka led by Bachir Attar, a second group created out of the 1970s formation), is a masterpiece of performance and production, coming closer than any previous release to capturing the richness and intensity of seeing the band on home turf. Music suddenly becomes medicine when its aura goes from 2D to surround sound. When you can hear each of the dozen or more flutes as they play their distinct, if similar, melodies, moving back and forth across the group as if the entire ensemble were being panned from one ear to the other. The music suddenly becomes deeply (and intentionally) disorienting, while shifting micro polyrhythms ensure a transformative degree of interlocking rhythmic and melodic complexity.

Unlike their more well-known Sufi compatriots the Gnawa, whose deep roots in sub-Saharan Africa are well known, the MMJ seem at the surface to be rooted in the Ahl-Srif. But their music tells a different story. Especially in the wee hours of the morning when current *rais* (leader), Ahmed El Attar, snaps his drumhead with particular intensity and the musical geography changes with scant warning. Suddenly, the music is no longer Srifian, Rifian, Arab or Amazigh; rather, the groove transforms into a rhythm and feel that is immediately recognisable as emanating from south of the Niger River. That is the moment everyone starts breathing music, and you feel lighter than air.

As Aaron Bebe Sukura, one of Ghana's best traditional multi-instrumentalists, puts it to me: "There is so much that is 'African' when I listen to [MMJ], from the flutes to the rhythm, which when it starts to move has the feel of a Ghanaian brass band." Zakaria Ibrahim, the founder of El Mastaba Center for Egyptian Folklore and music director of El Tanbura and Nuba Nil, captures the group's wider appeal: "You can hear both North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa in them. This music is *the* link, with *zar*-like melodies and sub-Saharan rhythms."

Despite the clear sonic resonances, until recently discussions of the 'African' roots of the music of Joujouka was limited to *habitués* of the village's annual festival (although one 16th-century dictionary of local Sufi saints suggests Sidi Ahmed Sheikh was black African). On the rare occasions when the subject is raised with the musicians they would respond with incredulity. Of course, they had heard Gnawa, and the Gnawa and their ancestors had often played at the same ceremonies for the Sultan in the precolonial era, but there was no direct connection, nor shared lineage between them.

Yet Morocco exposes what Leary described as a 'crossroads of space and time;' the same is true for all great music, especially trance. In the second half of the 20th century, Joujouka was an agent of musical inspiration, influencing not only the Beats, and generations of rock'n'rollers, but some of the greatest jazz musicians of the post-bop era, such as Randy Weston.



The Master Musicians of Joujouka live at the Centre Pompidou in Paris

Heiman Vanaerschoot – SOFAM

Rikki Stein, who managed the MMJ and then Fela Kuti, is better positioned than most to understand what creates such spaces of connectivity and transcendence with the group, and how it links them to the music of West Africa. "When musicians reach a certain level of communication, they get what Fela called the 'underground spiritual game.' I heard it at the Shrine with Fela, and in Joujouka before him, [the] point where everyone is truly listening to each other, and a conversation is going on inside the music. It's like they freeze time."

"The rave scene was understood to be a deeply spiritual experience"

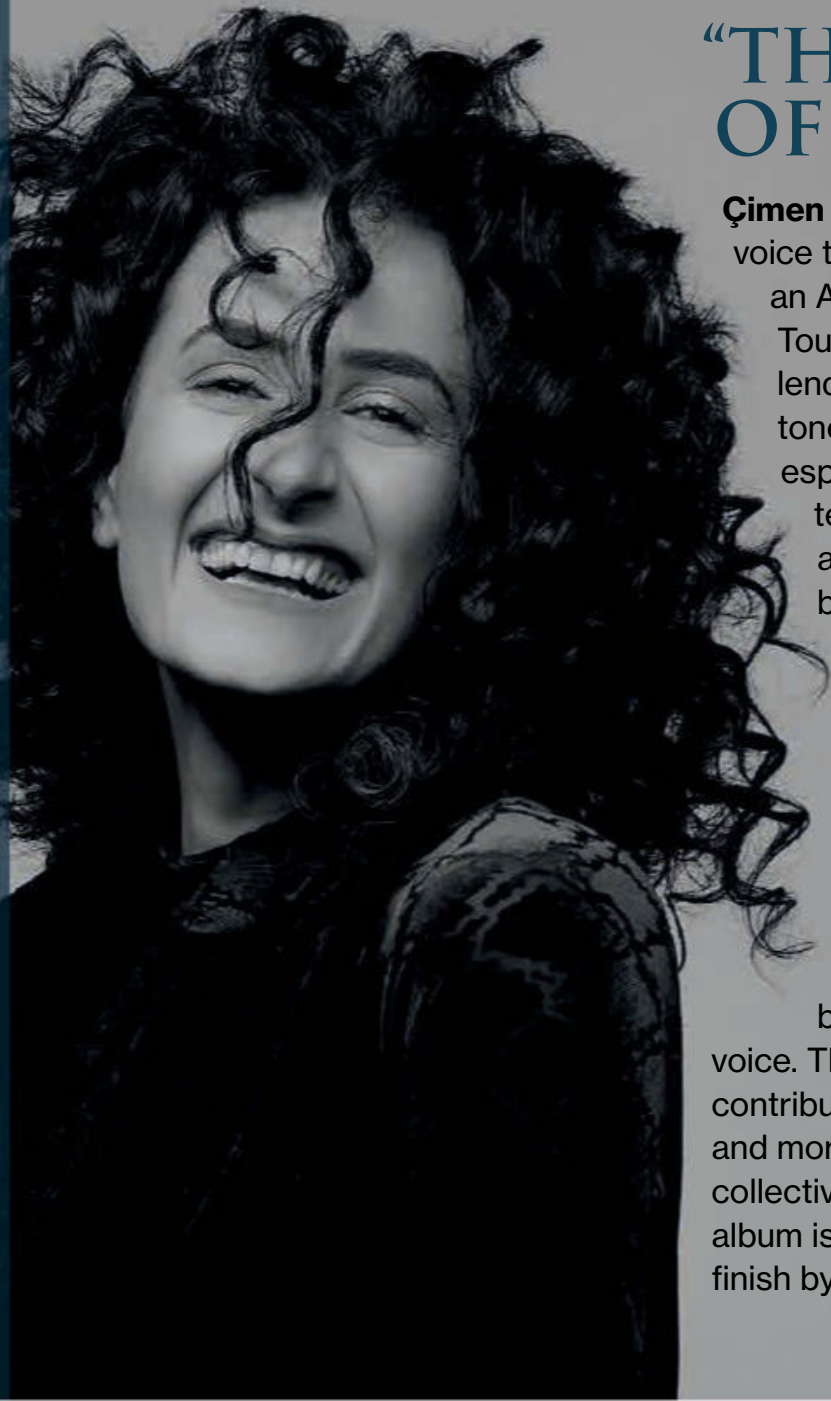
As groove and virtuosity began to separate within rock'n'roll with the rise of punk and new wave, improvisation and innovation moved towards electronic music. Much of it was quickly concretised through samples and loops with the ascendancy of recorded hip-hop, but live the genre was far more improvisational, with the ability to

freestyle at the forefront of the music. Similarly, EDM more broadly retained a strong element of improvisation, especially within the rapidly developing rave scene. This isn't surprising considering that, like hip-hop, core EDM genres such as house and techno were created and first popularised by marginalised black and Latino (and often gay) artists before the genre was whitewashed and its history obscured as it went mainstream.

From the beginning, the rave scene was compared to and even understood to be a deeply spiritual experience. Both musicians and listeners experienced raves as sites of intense spiritual and psychic stimulation, and even healing. The crowd's emotions were expertly directed and elevated by the DJs, just as they had been by the shamans of 60s and 70s rock, jazz, blues and funk. Some raves explicitly designed their programmes with reference to various religious traditions.

It is easy, then, to understand why EDM has been long inspired by Sufi grooves. The intensity and expansive improvisation beneath the surface of seemingly rock-steady rhythms was, and remains, common to all kinds of propulsive ▶

ÇİMEN YALÇIN



“THE MELODIES OF THIS LAND”

Çimen Yalçın has come to be known as “the voice that made Turkey shed tears”: She is an Artist of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in singing and her voice that lends expression to the many unique tones of Anatolia has become well-known especially for her singing featured in television series. Now, her first solo album “**The Melodies of This Land**” is being released by **Kalan Music**.

“The Melodies of This Land” comprises 15 works, with songs and traditional songs performed in Turkish, Azerbaijani, Kurdish and the Laz language, and also Iranian, Armenian and Balkan melodies performed with new lyrics. The richness of Anatolia in all its breadth is thus reflected in the artist's voice. The album was completed with the contributions of ten different music arrangers and more than a hundred musicians, a collective work of great commitment. This album is the last album produced from start to finish by the late **Hasan Saltık**.



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spiritual music. What the great Muslim philosopher Ibn al-Arabi called the ‘second hearing’ (*istama’ al-thani*) – the goal of *sama*, listening to sacred music in order to more deeply experience and move closer to God – enables the spiritual penetration of body and soul together, producing the kinds of ecstatic states common not only to most forms of Sufi music, but to many secular styles as well.

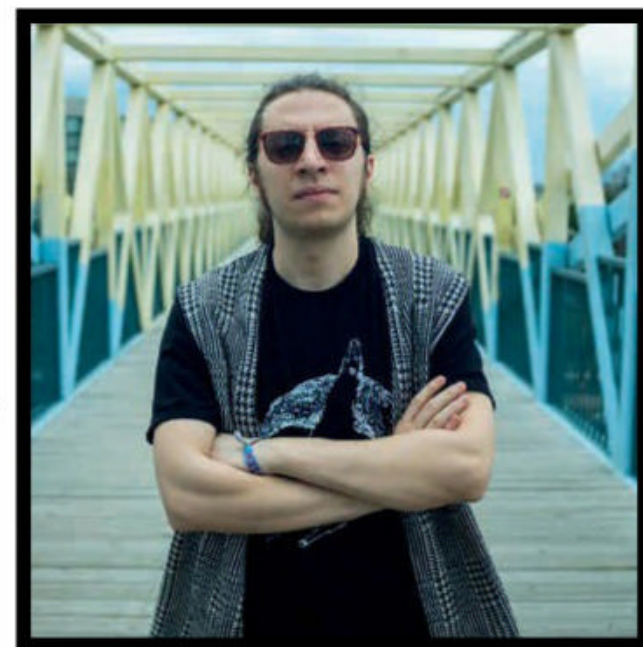
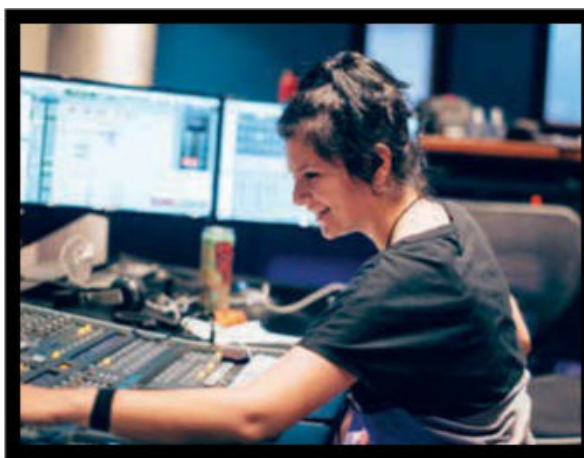
In Arab and larger Middle Eastern cultures this phenomenon is represented by the concept of *tarab* (ecstasy) that has defined virtuosic art music for at least a thousand years, epitomised by the incomparable voice of Oum Kalthoum. *Tarab* is characterised, as *oud* maestro Simon Shaheen describes it, by artist and audience being perfectly in tune, creating a “harmonious exchange” of energy that links them together for the duration of the performance.

Anyone who has experienced a rave will recognise this feeling. Beirut-based artist and label executive Ghazi Abdel Baki describes it to me after listening to *Live in Paris* as “listeners reaching a state of complete immersion in the music, and the music taking them somewhere they couldn’t otherwise reach.” Of course, most music generates this experience to some degree, but it’s the combination of the aural and physical intensity that makes a rave – and other intense musical experiences – so uniquely powerful.

The first recognised ‘electronic’ music recording was made by an Egyptian artist, Halim al-Dabh, one of the most important electronic music composers and scholars in history. His first recording was a zar ceremony, which he manipulated with reverbs, echo chambers and voltage controls. Today, EDM is a return home for Arabic music, after several decades where pop music became much more like its Western counterparts – short and formulaic. As Baki points out, the experimentalism and improvisation at the core of EDM and the length of the songs are in fact part of the DNA of Arab improvisational music. “But now it’s the DJs and electronic musicians who are the inheritors of the *tarab* tradition, using the production techniques and possibilities offered by digital technologies to take people to new sonic, and through it, emotional and spiritual states.”

Moroccan DJ and composer Selwa Abd, aka Bergsonist, is one of the scene’s most innovative EDM and experimental music creators. He has seen the maturation of the Arab scene first-hand, with at least part of its growing success attributed to a return to its roots and the traditional improvisational music of Joujouka. “When you see the roots of the music and how it has stayed intact all these years, you can hear how similar it is to dance and techno because of the combination of steady rhythm and slightly, but ever-changing, melodies from the flutes. I love the improvisational aspect and the groove – it’s Moroccan Detroit techno, but from centuries ago.”

From the other end of the Arab world, Syrian EDM artist Hello Psychaleppo feels the same. When you listen to MMJ, he says, you realise that “the mentality of the drums is actually modern and progressive, using subtle changes in rhythm and tempo to guide the music, rather than a heavy focus on melody, as with *tarab*. Yet while the melody might initially sound like a bunch of slightly out-of-tune unisons, with deeper listens



Shaneika Aguilan: Andrew Cagle

EDM is a return home for Arabic music, tapping into the same trance traditions as the Master Musicians of Joujouka: (clockwise from top) Salome MC, Hello Psychaleppo and Ghazi Abdel Baki

“EDM at its best is recapturing the old techniques”

you can differentiate the various individual parts and it’s mesmerising. I try to do something similar with various slightly detuned oscillators on my synths to create a chorus effect. EDM at its best is recapturing the old techniques.”

MMJ’s interplay of the ritualistic percussion and disorienting melodies is key to its success, as Iranian hip-hop producer Salome MC notes, “it gives a sense of ecstasy... and that’s what you’re trying to bring together when you’re a DJ performing at a rave as well. That’s really the function of this music. It’s the original trance music, so it lends itself naturally to EDM.”

A year after visiting Joujouka with Burroughs, journalist

Craig Karpel wondered whether Brian Jones ‘recorded Joujouka... for the rest of the band to cop licks from like they had from old Chuck Berry sides.’ Such appropriation has also been criticised in EDM given its tendency to sample. But it’s not just the licks that matter, it’s the feel. What Palestinian metal guitarist-

turned electronica composer Abed Hathout calls the ‘rawness’ of MMJ is what links them to the best EDM today. “MMJ is just so much more raw and aggressive than other Sufi trance music, but their music is so open that you can go anywhere with it.”

That fluidity and constant movement is why the best EDM has you breathing rather than merely hearing the music. But while EDM’s horizons keep growing, especially in Africa and the Middle East, traditional artists like the Master Musicians of Joujouka are facing new challenges as the younger generation gravitate towards the cities or turn away from their parents’ music. What is clear, however, is that both the most ancient and most modern music exist in productive tension and inspiration. As EDM becomes more ubiquitous across the heartlands of traditional trance music, closer collaborations will help preserve the past and compose a much more powerful and groovy future. ♦

+ ALBUM *The Master Musicians of Joujouka’s new album, Live in Paris, is reviewed this issue, see p50*

+ LISTEN *Hear the track ‘Aayta’ from Live in Paris on this month’s covermount CD, track 11*

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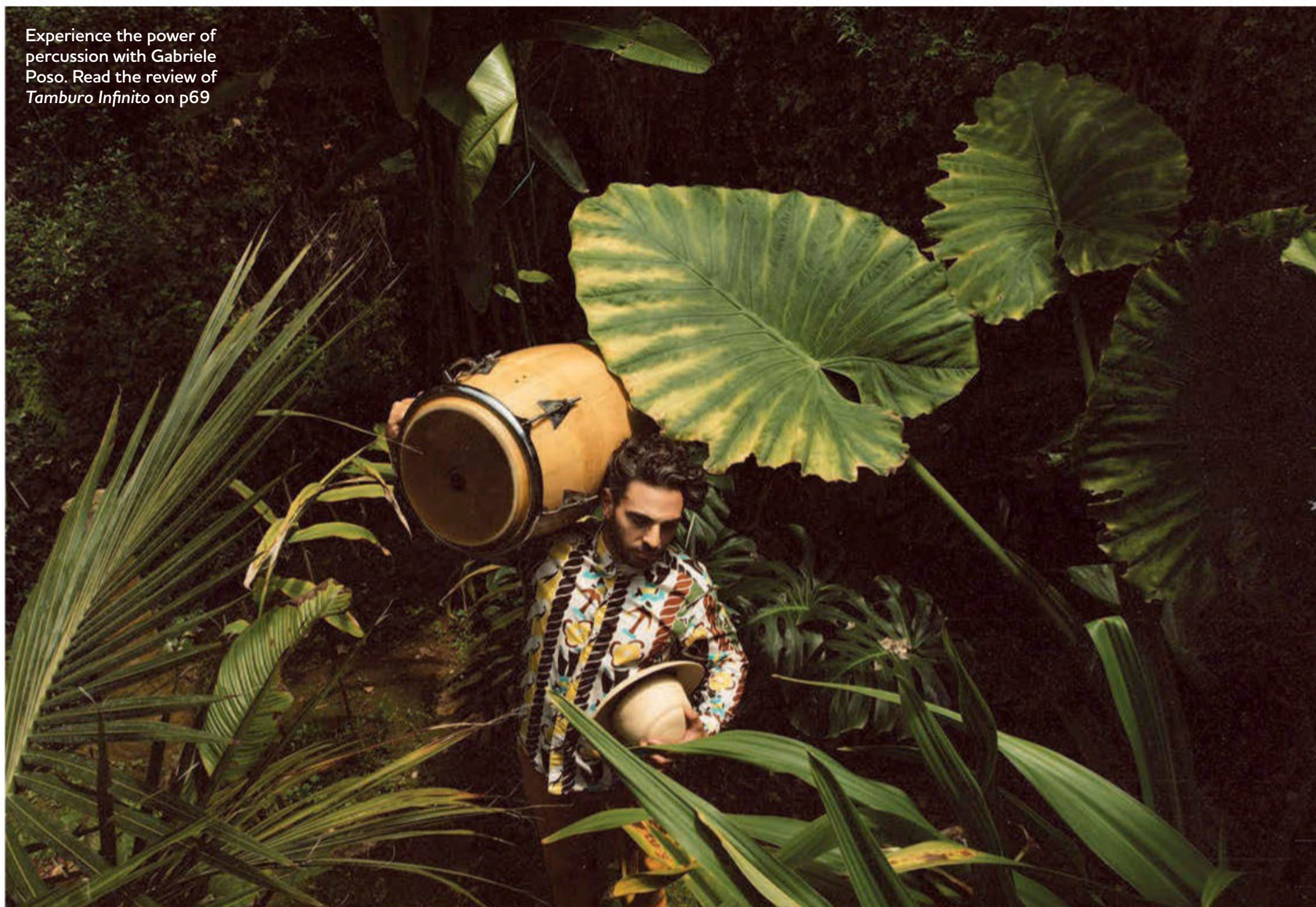
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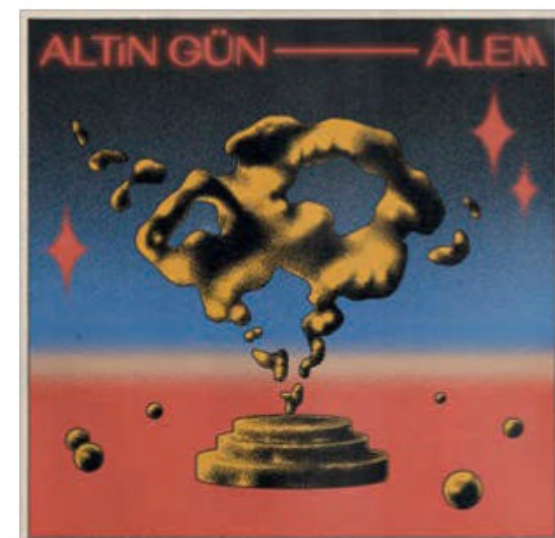
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Experience the power of percussion with Gabriele Poso. Read the review of *Tamburo Infinito* on p69



‘It’s their imaginative interpretations of Turkish folk standards that really stand out. ‘Badi Sabah Olmadan’ wraps electric *saz* and microtonal synth squiggles around a hypnotic bass squelch that feels like a Kraftwerk-inspired cousin of Donna Summer’s ‘I Feel Love’

Altın Gün’s album Âlem is reviewed on p63



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Abdelli Songs of Exile

ARC Music (67 mins)

★★★★★

Berber baritone returns after almost a decade



Albums by the Brussels-based Algerian singer and songwriter Abderrahmane Abdelli are as rare

as an oasis in the desert – and every bit as refreshing. His Berber songs and mandola playing first came to our attention when Real World released his *New Moon* album in 1995. He supported Peter Gabriel on tour but it took another eight years before the label released the 2003 follow-up *Among Brothers*. A further nine years elapsed before he released 2012's *Destiny*, a beautiful set of bittersweet songs based on the themes of exile and loss. Nine years on comes this fourth set, on which he fuses Berber/Kabyle tradition with contemporary pop and global influences while again dealing with the same themes.

Singing in a throaty but melodic baritone, he's joined by musicians from Morocco, Tunisia, Belgium, Chile, Brazil and Armenia on a range of diverse instruments that incorporate cello, flute, violin, clarinet and *duduk*. Highlights include 'Da Slimane', a homage to the master of Kabyle *chanson*, Slimane Azem, and 'Tirga u Fenan', a tribute to the Berber artists who have over the years fought for justice and freedom.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

TRACK TO TRY *Ayahviv Rouh*

Les Filles de Illighadad At Pioneer Works

Sahel Sounds (46 mins)

★★★★★

Try a little tende-ness?



Unique among the thriving Touareg guitar band scene, three of the four members of Les Filles de Illighadad

are women – hence their name – and they bring the traditional women's *tende* music into play as well as the standard *assouf* (desert blues) style. After two successful albums on Sahel Sounds, their third is a live offering via the Brooklyn arts space Pioneer Works. As for their sound, you know it, you love it: it's that Touareg guitar groove! Les Filles are a small ensemble, with three electric guitars and calabash percussion; their lack of bass gives an

unusual but not unpleasant, soundscape that is expansive without feeling particularly dense. The music is very self-assured – no effects on the clean electric guitars, no solos except those that develop naturally from the repeating patterns, and none of the bombast that characterises some other Touareg rock groups. Once they hit the rhythm and the occasional brain-melting blues note, they don't need fireworks because they have the whole force of the desert behind them, and the audience responds in turn.

At Pioneer Works is a solid set of superior grooves played with stylish confidence, if not necessarily the most exciting album you'll ever hear.

JIM HICKSON

TRACK TO TRY *Chakalan*

Batch Gueye Moytoul

Batch Gueye (44 mins)

★★★★★

Senegalese singer lacks the shine of previous releases



UK-based Senegalese dancer-turned-singer Batch Gueye had a very promising first

album, *Ndiarigne*, back in 2014, and has been a key element of the forward-thinking Afro-futurist jazz group Fofoulah. His solo work has gone downhill since then, though, and *Moytoul* feels like a shadow of what he is capable of. Where that first album managed to alternate between hard-hitting and raw and delicate and emotional, here, the moods seem to have been smoothed out into a middle-of-the-road *mbalax*-lite.

Gueye is at his best when he surrounds his soulful, high-pitched Wolof vocals around the polyrhythms of *sabar* and *tama* drums and guitars, but too often here he falls back on an over-reliance on uninteresting synths, pads and beats. There are some good ideas and impressive singing, but the whole thing has a poor execution, uninspiring and lacking in the fun energy that should be coursing through it all. The track 'Waye Wi' stands out as a high point, and offers a glimpse at the quality that could reasonably be expected throughout.

Overall, a missed opportunity from Gueye – some shining moments amid a generally disappointing album with little to set it apart from the crowd. I want the old Batch back!

JIM HICKSON

TRACK TO TRY *Waye Wi*

Fadhilee Itulya Shindu Shi

Naxos World (62 mins)

★★★★★

Omutibo anthems offer joyful respite from a weird year



On his previous album, Kenyan musician Fadhilee Itulya celebrated the dance music of Western Kenya's

Isukha and Idakho communities. His new album pays homage to George Mukabi and the *omutibo* style of music on the track 'Pombe'. Omutibo is a finger-picked form of guitar music used by the Luhya people of Western Kenya and was popularised by Mukabi in the 50s and 60s.

Fadhilee Itulya is an accomplished guitarist and vocalist and, like his last album *Kwetu*, this new record successfully fuses East African music with acoustic folk, pop, dance and world music. 'Njoo' has Christian religious references; 'Afirika' explains the meaning of the Luhya exclamation '*shindu shi*' and laments the situation with the global COVID-19 virus; 'Amina' is about a young girl and has a charming Luhya counter-vocal by Lulu Said Abdalla; the pan-African song 'Sengonanga' pays tribute to previous African leaders. It is a varied album and with his tight band Fadhilee Itulya creates some beautifully produced bubbly arrangements that celebrate Kenya's own musical roots while gracefully nodding toward the Congolese rumba *soukous* guitar sound.

MARTIN SINNOCK

TRACK TO TRY *Sengonanga*

Rachel Magoola Resilience: Songs of Uganda

ARC Music (43 mins)

★★★★★

Vibrant and varied tunes hold an important message



A former member of Uganda's longest lasting and most celebrated group the Afrigo Band, Rachel Magoola

has released her seventh solo album. She is perhaps best known for her massive hit 'Obangaina', which she performed with the Afrigo Band. In addition to her successful musical career she is these days highly respected within the Ugandan community for her philanthropy and position as a member of parliament representing her region.

Resilience is a collection of rhythmically upbeat songs, some traditional and some new, with profound lyrical messages that reflect the hardships and struggle that the Ugandan population faces. Her voice is confident, versatile, and stylistically reminiscent of the late Abeti Masikini from neighbouring Congo. Magoola's lyrics are sung in Ugandan dialects and some of the songs feature traditional folk instruments like the *endingidi* (single-string fiddle), *adungu* (nine-string bow harp), xylophone, thumb piano and traditional percussion. The superb backing musicians are able to effortlessly switch from traditional instrumentation to electric *soukous* rhythms with bandleader and multi-instrumentalist Njoroge Kiracho's impressive guitar. It's a polished, varied and thoroughly entertaining album.

MARTIN SINNOCK

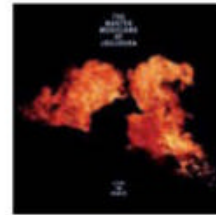
TRACK TO TRY *Otuuse*

The Master Musicians of Joujouka Live in Paris

Unlistenable Records (80 mins)

★★★★★

Concert album celebrates a millennium of Sufi trance



The collective of Sufi trance musicians led by Ahmed El Attar (one of two troupes spawning from the

village of Joujouka in the Rif mountains of northern Morocco) has done much to popularise the hypnotic music they devote their lives to, performing around the world and collaborating with ambient duo The Orb. But, as these pristine recordings from 2016 reveal, they've done so without the slightest deviation from their 1,000-year-old tradition.

These performances feel like a mythic transmission beamed from antiquity. The concert begins with flutes setting up a high, trilling drone weaving in and out of hand percussion. Next comes a handful of songs, with the late Abdeslam Boukhzar leading a throaty call-and-response and Sheik Ahmed Talha providing a tart, prancing commentary on the *kamanja* (mountain violin) as the drums gather momentum and energy. But all this is merely a prelude to the main event – the phenomenal 43-minute 'Boujeloud' ritual, in which keening, oboe-like *raita* spin a dizzying web over furiously pounding drums, building to a truly transcendent climax. If you haven't yet been able to attend the Master

Dwayne Kilvington, KOG,
Tom Excell and Finn Booth



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Onipa Tapes of Utopia

Boomerang Records (29 mins)



Pan-Afrofuturist mixtape to chase away the gloom



This cassette (which is also available as a download, obviously) brims with infectious music, lyrics and a hard-wired utopian variety of optimism. Onipa were recent guests on the monthly *Mwalimu Express* radio show Rita Ray and I present on Soho Radio and they spread their joyous humour and uplifting outlook right across the airwaves. *Tapes of Utopia*, their second release, is a constant delight.

Cassette is a perfect medium to convey their love of analogue and the feelings of unity and strength of purpose they have found in those old-school musical roots in Ghana and across Africa. The core of the band are exceptionally fluent, flexible and funky musicians: KOG (aka Kweku of

Ghana from KOG & the Zongo Brigade) on vocals, *balafon* and percussion; Dwayne Kilvington (aka Wonky Logic) on synths; Tom Excell on all-embracing guitar, percussion and electronics, with fellow Nubiyan Twist members Joe Henwood on baritone sax and Finn Booth on drums. They share and spread the joy with artists from across the diaspora – Sheffield rapper Franz Von and legendary drummer Tony Allen – along with Ghanaian firebrands M3NSA and Wiyaala, and rhythms from DRC, Nigeria and South Africa. Plus the delight that is 'Gbomo', their Oliver Mtukudzi homage, a beautiful incarnation of Zimbabwean music, closing with a heartfelt lament about corruption.

MAX REINHARDT

TRACK TO TRY *Chicken No Dey Fly feat Franz Von*

Musicians' annual festival at home in Joujouka, this is the next best thing.

DANIEL SPICER

TRACK TO TRY *Boujeloud*

Nomfusi The Red Stoep

Delicious Tunes (45 mins)



South African pop star brings us all together on the stoep



In South Africa, a *stoep* is a veranda of a house and any gathering on it creates an instant space of sharing and community. With her fourth full-length, South African singer Nomfusi invites us all to join her in her observations of life and to share her devotion to her lineage (Xhosa clicks abound in first single 'Iqaqa')

and her belief in the possibilities of merging roots sounds – irresistible *maskandi* guitars, keyboard grooves and township rhythms – with the effervescence of mainstream pop, as well as soul and jazz.

Produced with care and grace by saxophonist Steve Dyer and supported by some terrific, understated playing by some terrific, understated playing by Mark Williams (lead guitar), Khola Phalatse (bass), Lungile Maduna (drums) and Sanilde Mgcina (keys), *The Red Stoep* places Nomfusi's voice at its heart. Its evocative power allows her to traverse social issues (gender-based violence on 'Nomahamle') as effortlessly as matters of the heart and spirit – on the gorgeous album closer 'Yesu Langa Lomphefumlo (The Hymn)' – and draws us together in this time of great need.

DIANE COETZER

TRACK TO TRY *Ayeza*

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Cameroon Garage Funk

Analog Africa (66 mins)



The sounds of 70s Cameroon



This is another fine compilation from Analog Africa, amassing 16 tracks recorded in Cameroon's capital Yaoundé during the 1970s. All of these recordings have a peculiar history, having been committed to disc in an Adventist church at opportune moments when services weren't being undertaken. While the fidelity here is far from perfect – the songs were captured using a singular microphone – there's an earnestness across the tracks that can't help but feel infectious. Opener 'Africa Iyo' may be

familiar to some. Released initially as a 45 in 1978, it's had decent rotation over the years. It also features music from Louis Wasson, an arranger and guitarist whose self-titled debut came out that same year through Sonafric, and Bony Mballa. Mballa's track, 'Mezik Me Mema', is joyous. The saxophonist might squeak in the opening theme – takes were cherished owing to limited time in the studio – but the consequent tune is full of energy.

There are extensive liner notes, offering an insight into Yaoundé's bustling scene during this period. By the end of the disc, you're really left wondering what could have been; if there was proper infrastructure to capture all of this wonderful material when it was produced.

ALEX DE LACEY

TRACK TO TRY *Esele Mulema Moam* by Los Camaroes

Adrian + Meredith Bad for Business

Adrian + Meredith (37 mins)



Rogue folk from Music City



Welcome to the Nashville living room of Adrian and Meredith Krygowski, where they and a few

friends have worked on this dramatic album of Americana and 'rogue folk.' The name *Bad for Business* seems to sum up a lot of what's happened over the last 18 months but is particularly apt for the music industry, and even more so for a town like Nashville, aka Music City. It also hints at some of the other themes dealt with on this recording; among them gun violence, the legacy of Donald Trump, immigration and climate change.

An ostensibly country-rock sound is given more shape by interesting additions of Appalachian banjo, Balkan brass and surf-a-billy guitar. The intro to 'California' reminds me very much of Hendrix's sound on 'All Along the Watchtower'. And, since we're talking of Dylan covers, many of Meredith's fiddle solos bring to mind the violin on 'Hurricane'. Adding to the variety of influences here, there's a cover of the 1960s polka hit 'Who Stole the Keishka' and some foot percussion on 'Kids These Days'. Eclectic in scope and feisty in delivery there are also many great contributions from some of Nashville's most sought-after musicians.

TOM NEWELL

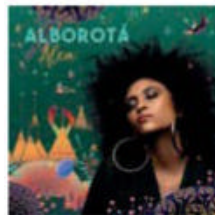
TRACK TO TRY *Even*

Alea Alborotá

Alea Music (46 mins)



An exploration of female Afro-Latin identity



Alborotá (meaning loud, rowdy, riotous in the feminine form) is an album created to explore notions

of strength, perseverance, feminism and Latinx empowerment. Born in Colombia and based in the Bronx, New York City, Alea draws on aspects of Latin folkloric music, such as *cumbia*, *porro*, *curralao* and *huapango* with pop and electronic music, all with an underlying Afro-Latin groove.

Speaking on the album, Alea says: 'I wanted to write... about my roots as a Colombian Afro-Indigenous woman. So this was also an exploration of

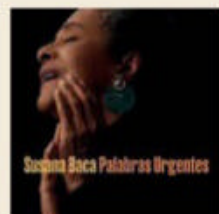


Susana Baca Palabras Urgentes

Real World Records (34 mins)



Uncompromising emotion from the Peruvian great



At 77 years old, Baca has never sounded better; her voice has lost none of its dynamism and the careful production of this new album gives her even more room to shine. A great example is 'Color de Rosa', which featured on her much-loved 2001 album, *Lamento Negro*. The arrangement is similar, but the emotion wrenched out of the performance is so much greater, the moody intro flowering into the glorious levity of the chorus, even when the lyrics carry such melancholy. The rousing Andean brass band on the pre-chorus to 'Negra del Alma' is a touch of class, adding jubilation to what must surely be the definitive version of Manuelcha

Prado's song. 'Sorongo' is similarly bombastic, but with a poignant message about slavery, the chanted chorus and Afro-jazz arrangement leaving no emotion left untapped.

There is fire in Baca's belly, with songs paying homage to South America's female guerilla fighters and tracing Afro-Latin heritage through tango, *milonga*, *cueca* and *landó*. Snarky Puppy's Michael League is on production duty and deftly adds touches of donkey jawbone, marimba, and so much more to give depth to these songs without ever getting in Baca's way. It's a glorious testament to the continuing mission of Baca's to preserve and project Afro-Latin culture.

RUSS SLATER

TRACK TO TRY *Negra del Alma*

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Javier Falcon

identity, one that I wasn't close with until I moved far away and somehow labels became a permanent part of who I was... re-signifying the pain of being a Latin American woman taught to be silent.'

The title-track of the album boasts intricately placed percussion and guitar lines, rooted by a syncopated, grooving bass – reminiscent of the jazzier arrangements of Buika. 'Échale Sal', the opener, is a laid-back groove complemented by half-spoken, half-sung vocals. Alea's warm, textured voice lends itself well to the quieter, more delicate arrangements found here. But she holds her own on bigger band tunes like 'No Me Apaga Nadie' (one of the singles released before the

album), I'd be excited to see this vocal dexterity in a live setting.

CHARLOTTE ALGAR

TRACK TO TRY *Alborotá*

El Balcón Contracorriente

El Balcón (32 mins)



Musical storytelling from Montréal inspired by Mexico



Contracorriente, the third album from El Balcón, is alive with the unique vibrancy and musical playfulness of *son jarocho*, traditional music from Veracruz in Mexico, as well as

influences from the Balkans and Greece. Bringing in unique rearrangements and reinterpretations from the roots of these traditional sounds, the record is at once both familiar and fresh.

Based out of Montréal, El Balcón came together in 2018 through their shared passion to represent cultural diversity and the beauty of community. And they have succeeded. In *Contracorriente*, the vocals of Valeria de Marre and Charles Cantin – who also plays the *jarana* (*jarocho* guitar) – passionately play off each other but always give one another space. Also featuring guitar, violin, *cajón* and double bass, the musicians seem to relax into the communal

spotlight throughout. The result is a sound that blends all their influences into asymmetrical rhythms and piquant melodies. The album's standout track 'Candela' is a teleporter to a mythical time when the townsfolk got together and shared story through song. And this spirit of community and easy flair for good musical storytelling comes across throughout the record. Uncompromising and unique, *Contracorriente* will appeal to both progressive and traditional world music ears.

KARY STEWART

TRACK TO TRY *Candela*

Buena Vista Social Club: 25th Anniversary Edition

World Circuit (2 CDs, 128 mins)

★★★★★

Fresh takes and new tracks for the landmark record



Readers of *Songlines* will need no reminder of how the combination of Ry Cooder's meticulous

production, a cast of veteran musicians who seemed to have emerged from the land that time forgot, a clutch of classic songs from the pre-revolutionary golden age of Cuban music and a suitably nostalgic feature film by Wim Wenders launched a world music phenomenon.

Many of the ageing musicians involved have since passed on, but as you would expect with such timeless music, everything still sounds as beguilingly evocative as ever on this expanded 25th anniversary reissue, which comes with alternative takes on eight tracks, 11 songs not included on the original album and a 40-page book, updating and expanding this reviewer's original 1997 liner notes. Highlights from the previously unreleased material include Compay Segundo taking charge on the track 'La Pluma', a lovely duet with Eliades Ochoa, and the slinky 'Salud Compay', while 'Mandinga' and 'Descarga Rubén' finds pianist Rubén González in miraculous improvisational flight. Even if the 'new' material lacks the polish of Cooder's nuanced post-production on the initial album, this anniversary reissue is nevertheless redolent with atmosphere and the off-the-cuff nature offers a fascinating insight into the spirit of the original enterprise.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

TRACK TO TRY *Salud Compay*

Dos Santos City of Mirrors

International Anthem (38 mins)

★★★★★

Border-blurring tunes from Chicago-based troupe



Dos Santos are based in Chicago, but as the five-piece's surnames/nicknames –

Chavez, Villarreal, 'Maestro' Vale, Garza, Karagianis – indicate, this is a Latinx project. If the relevant border is physically remote, it's always there, ghosting through the songs. Opener 'A Shot in the Dark' is an almost ambient chant with a lead vocal that's Mexican in sonorities, Inca-Peruvian in intentionality. 'Alma Cósmica' is a Calexico-ish desert rock-pop song, with requisite tremolo and sliding twang. A shimmying riff and vintage sound effects on 'A Tu Lado' reminded me of Manu Chao, Lila Downs, perhaps Ojos de Brujo. Ten more tracks try out different fusions and rhythms, modes and moods.

What holds the 13-song sequence together is a stripped-back treatment, a downbeat, minor key inflection, and superb production. Bandleader Alex Chavez has called the album '*an assemblage... glimpses of tradition... reflections on our collective present.*' This prismatic quality is a weakness as well as a strength. Dos Santos have some great ideas but they don't really peak all that often; 'Ghost. Me.', which splices Radiohead maudlin on to Gustavo Cerati grandiose is the best song. An intriguing, occasionally intense reflection of the reality of many Latin Americans in the US in 2021, *City of Mirrors* is wilfully hard to place. Have a listen. Originality isn't actually that common.

CHRIS MOSS

TRACK TO TRY *Ghost. Me.*

The Faux Paws The Faux Paws

Great Bear Records (47 mins)

★★★★★

Barn roof-raising feel-good folk



With a sound soaked in the contra dance and bluegrass tradition, The Faux Paws (brothers Andrew

and Noah VanNorstrand and Chris Miller) could easily have served us a neat side of familiar folk, but the boys expertly play with our expectations and the 11 tracks on their debut

introduce an exciting new trio. There are several sweet songs here, many with an almost pop-y vibe. 'She's Not Looking for You' or 'Child of the Great Lakes' are cute, but the Paws' strength is most evident when they let loose their Cajun spirit. Barn-buster 'Guacmaster' is a groovy instrumental, complete with saxophone solo, while 'Southport,' another semi-experimental number, delivers fiery percussion that sets the scene for a toe-tapping frenzy of fiddle and sax. These two tracks are worth the price of the album alone, but some songs disappear a little into the background.

In lesser hands, the blending of jazz, funk and dance influences would run the risk of becoming messy, but this accomplished trio merge the sounds effortlessly. The group's debut may have been ten years in the making, but it's a testament to their talent that *The Faux Paws* is a fresh, feel-good and sheer fun listen.

BILLY ROUGH

TRACK TO TRY *Guacmaster*

Thiago França Presents A Espetacular Charanga Do França The Importance of Being Espetacular

Mais Um (41 mins)

★★★★★

Shortcut to the Carnaval spirit



The avant-garde saxophonist, samba revivalist and Metá Metá co-founder Thiago França has been

running the Carnaval *charanga* band A Espetacular Charanga do França since 2013. Ace compilation *The Importance of Being Espetacular* gathers a baker's dozen of their finest efforts, showing how the group channel influences from a range of genres, França's complex arrangements making the most of material that points in different directions, yet always harks back to Carnaval.

Beginning with the thrilling brass blast of 'Hasta la Cumbia', with its distinctive two-step rhythm, signals that França's take on charanga is wide-ranging; 'Cadê Renan?' has a *baile funk* sensibility with riveting *cuica* work, and there's a sombre take of Raça Negra's 'Cheia de Manias', a schlocky 90s *pagode* hit. In a more traditional charanga mode, 'Carnaval Arco-Íris' and 'Hino da Charanguinha', both led by MPB *chanteuse* Verônica Ferriani, and 'Vem Desacatar' with Lucas Santtana keep Carnaval at the

heart of the matter. In contrast, 'Cara do Apetite', with vocalist Tulipa Ruiz, has a screeching rock guitar lead, and there's an eerie brass-band remake of Metá Metá's 'Obá Iná', though 'Não Para', the band's take on Michael Jackson's 'Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough', will surely have you rocking on your feet.

DAVID KATZ

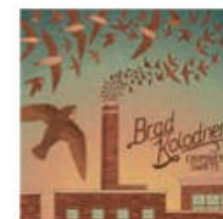
TRACK TO TRY *Carnaval Arco-Íris*

Brad Kolodner Chimney Swifts

Fenchurch Music (40 mins)

★★★★★

Boon for all clawhammer banjo fans



Brad Kolodner's solo debut album, *Chimney Swifts*, is a splendid introduction to contemporary

clawhammer banjo music. Kolodner's playing and choice of material represent an imaginative approach to the instrument, which simultaneously exalts the banjo's old-timey roots while placing its sonic qualities in a context that younger ears may find appealing. A founding member of the Baltimore-based Irish/old-time/bluegrass fusion group Charm City Junction, Kolodner is well-known for duet performances and recordings with his father, Ken, and his radio broadcasting, which includes multiple weekly shows showcasing progressive bluegrass, Americana and old-time music.

Chimney Swifts is an all-instrumental mix of original and traditional material featuring Kolodner with a group of collaborators including his father (hammered dulcimer), Alex Lacquement (upright bass), Lucas Chohany (guitar), Patrick McAvinue (mandolin), Sean McComiskey (accordion) and Rachel Eddy (guitar) in various configurations. Among the album's 15 tracks, standout ▶



Brad Kolodner

performances include 'Catalpa Hop', a twangy, up-tempo bluegrass romp that swings like mad, and the title-track, which evokes the swirling balletic motion of the birds for which the song and album are named.

DOUG DELOACH

TRACK TO TRY *Catalpa Hop*

The Lucky Ones

The Lucky Ones (33 mins)

★★★★★

Bluegrass bangers from Canada's far north



Hailing from the Yukon Territory in the far north of Canada, The Lucky Ones took their

name from Alistair MacLeod's novel, *No Great Mischief*, which recounts the saga of a Scottish clan linked through generations by blood and a common Gaelic culture, particularly its language and music. For the band's debut album, singer-guitarists JD McCallen and Ian Smith, singer-mandolinist Ryan West, banjoist Aaron P Burnie, and fiddle player Kieran Poile have compiled eight songs, many of which were passed down by their parents and generations before them. The opening track, 'Fool's Gold', a dark ballad with woeful lyrics, harks back to the Klondike Gold Rush. Other songs, such as 'Since the Farm Got Sold', 'Waitin' on a Paycheque' and 'Drunken Goodnight', while possibly inspired by contemporary events, nevertheless perpetuate old lessons learned the hard way. The music, adeptly performed with palpable emotional sincerity, is conventional bluegrass filtered through a distinctly Canadian lens, tinged by isolation, melancholy and hardscrabble living.

DOUG DELOACH

TRACK TO TRY *Fool's Gold*

Gordie 'Crazylegs' MacKeeman

Folk for Little Folk Vol 1

Gordie MacKeeman (41 mins)

★★★★★

Charming tunes for big kids



Although listed as 'for little folk,' Canadian fiddler Gordie 'Crazylegs' MacKeeman's new album has plenty to offer adults who appreciate string band precision in pursuit of playful entertainment. A native of New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, as a youngster MacKeeman was an outstanding

step-dancer and fiddle prodigy. For the past several years, he has led the Rhythm Boys, a roots quartet that straddles acoustic styles ranging from Cajun, country and rockabilly to old-time, folk and Western swing, on tours stretching from Denmark's Tønder Festival and the UK's Cambridge Folk Festival to MerleFest in North Carolina and the Port Fairy Folk Festival in Australia.

MacKeeman's experience as a daycare attendant and autism assistant inspired and informed his commitment to recording *Folk for Little Folk Vol 1*. Highlights among the album's 17 tracks include an irresistibly charming version of 'Ladybugs' Picnic' from *Sesame Street*,

a hilarious cover of Tim O'Brien's 'Get Out There and Dance', and traditional children's favourites, such as 'Hokey Pokey', 'Old MacDonald' and 'Big Rock Candy Mountain'.

DOUG DELOACH

TRACK TO TRY *Ladybugs' Picnic*

Quantic & Nidia Góngora

Almas Conectadas

Tru Thoughts (42 mins)

★★★★★

Dynamic duo return



This is Quantic's second full-length release with Colombian singer Nidia Góngora (although they have

been working together for over ten years) but it couldn't be more different.

Whereas their previous album, 2017's *Curao*, flitted between showcases of Góngora's Afro-Pacific heritage and Quantic's trademark dub and electronica productions, this one comes across as a long-lost Latin soul production, dripping with sumptuous strings, warm vocals and working through a litany of rhythms. 'Balada Borracha' is a hazy *cumbia* for all the drinkers out there, in no hurry to get to the finish line. 'El Chiclan' shifts between a soulful pre-verse that evokes Bobby Hebb's iconic 'Sunny' before diving into the *clave*; 'Almas Conectadas' is hard to classify, with gorgeous strings, insistent percussion



Alan Messer

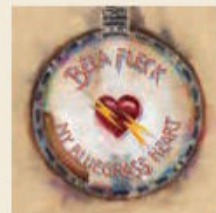
Béla Fleck

My Bluegrass Heart

Renew Records/BMG (2 CDs, 105 mins)

★★★★★

Banjoist's first record in two decades is a certified doozy



Bela Fleck's paean to the genre in which the banjoist established himself as a virtuosic instrumentalist and innovative composer is the finest bluegrass album of 2021. Wonderfully imaginative, irresistibly entertaining and technically challenging, *My Bluegrass Heart* features collaborators from early progressive and more recent projects including mandolinists Sam Bush and David Grisman, fiddler Stuart Duncan, bassist Edgar Meyer, dobro player Jerry Douglas and banjoist Tony Trischka.

That line-up alone would be enough reason to all but guarantee an extraordinary result. But what transports Fleck's first bluegrass album in more than 20 years into an alternate dimension is the alchemical melding of talent

from the old school with a posse of whippersnappers including mandolinist Chris Thile and banjoist Noam Pikelnny; guitarists Billy Strings, Molly Tuttle and Bryan Sutton; multi-instrumentalists Justin Moses and Sierra Hull; fiddlers Billy Contreras and Michael Cleveland; and bassist Paul Kowert. The ensemble playing and soloing are spectacular. The compositions and arrangements effortlessly glide between hot bluegrass, cool jazz, classical urbanity and world music funk. Standouts among the double-CD's 19 tracks include 'Slippery Eel', with its madcap tempo shifting *élan*, and 'Charm School,' a complex yet swinging chambergrass jam.

DOUG DELOACH

TRACK TO TRY *Slippery Eel* (feat Billy Strings & Chris Thile)

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and one of Góngora's most breezy vocals; while 'Adorar la Sangre' is almost Booker T & The MGs-esque with its driving, bluesy bassline. Throughout, oodles of fuzz and crackling guitar riffs, not to mention the melodious string arrangements that are now becoming a Quantic trademark, give the record the feel of those 60s and 70s pop and soul LPs, when it was still not out of the question to bring in an orchestra and a host of guest musicians to light up an album.

RUSS SLATER

TRACK TO TRY *Almas Conectadas*

John Showman, Chris Coole, Adrian Gross, Sam Allison, Mark Kilianski Adeline

Owl Records (55 mins)

★★★★★

Off-the-cuff old-time recorded in Ontario



Last March, a quintet of old-timey/bluegrass/Americana string specialists gathered

at a cottage on the shores of Beaver Lake in the heart of the Kawartha Highlands, Ontario, Canada. In sub-zero weather, they recorded 15 songs performed in a particular manner inspired by John Hartford's 'Windows' system of playing, which has nothing to do with computers.

The sequestered quintet included John Showman (fiddle) and Chris Coole (banjo) of The Lonesome Ace Stringband; Adrian Gross (mandolin) from The Slocan Ramblers; Sam Allison (upright bass and bass harmonica) of Sheesham and Lotus; and Mark Kilianski (guitar) of Golden Shoals. 'While we didn't follow [the Hartford system] to the letter... we borrowed its spirit of improvisation,' explains the album's liner notes. 'The arrangements happened on the spot, and in the moment – there was no planning and no safety net.'

The result is a joyous, rollicking, acoustic jam propelled by the finest fiddling, strumming, picking and plucking this side of, well, Beaver Lake, at the very least. Two tracks worthy of special note: the title-track for its sweetly flowing melody and brilliant solo trading, and 'Red Prairie Dawn', for Allison's bass harmonica bottom and the wonderfully elastic ensemble interplay.

DOUG DELOACH

TRACK TO TRY *Adeline*

Timba MM Outstanding

Naxos World (45 mins)

★★★★★

New kids on the Cuban scene don't quite hit the mark



Outstanding was recorded by a Montréal-based group of Canadian and Cuban musicians, Timba

MM (pronounced 'timba emmay emmay'). The accompanying press release promised an exploration of new, up and coming rhythms from the Cuban scene that are as yet undiscovered by the global market, and also some samba in a track called 'Del Bahia'. I found instead a very well-recorded, well-executed album presenting a very classic Cuban sound, no new grooves straight from the oven unfortunately. Or any samba.

The musical performances here are undoubtedly tasteful and educated. However, it's missing a certain something, a mind-melting trumpet solo moment or surprise rhythmic break, that makes this sort of music so exciting and visceral and fiery. I think this album functions well as an introduction to various Cuban styles in one sitting and would work well in a live setting. Not quite *Outstanding*, but there are nice moments to be found.

CHARLOTTE ALGAR

TRACK TO TRY *El Son*

Xochimoki Temple of the New Sun

Phantom Limb (41 mins)

★★★★★

Mesoamerican soundscapes find a modern audience



This is a collection of songs originally released on cassette in the 80s; it's intriguing trying to imagine

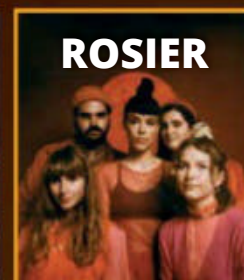
what the response at the time might have been for the music of Xochimoki, the project of American ethnomusicologist Jim Berenholz and Aztec descendant Mazatl Galindo. Recorded during rituals and meditations, sung in pre-Columbian Latin American languages and mainly using indigenous instruments, it's a curious release that time has perhaps been good to.

Back in the 80s it was classified as New Age, an exotic curio for those wishing to discover ancient instruments, whereas now a fondness for ambient and experimental ▶

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soundscapes offers it a new audience. In truth, it sits somewhere between these reputations, the opening trio of tracks moving through panpipes, exotica-esque percussion and ritualistic vocalising that have plenty of spirit but, aside from the frenetic finale of 'Nauai Ollin', *Temple of the New Sun* is full of slow-moving stuff, faint and floaty at times, precise but primordial, trying to evoke an imagined Mesoamerica. 'Tlalokan' is better, with an intriguing melody and rhythm that captures the swagger of nature at its most dense and primal. 'Kokoyo Kayotl' is even better, a riff with real chug, it brings a sense of adventure that is often lacking across the album.

RUSS SLATER

TRACK TO TRY *Kokoyo Kayotl*

VARIOUS ARTISTS

The High Note Mento Collection

Doctor Bird (2 CDs, 147 mins)

★★★★★

Jamaica's most popular mento artists all in one place



Mento was the first Jamaican popular music, a mix of calypso and local rhythms that won popularity across the island in the 1950s before being overtaken by ska in the early 1960s. Overtaken but never vanquished, mento's warmth and simplicity – often its performers employed acoustic guitar, banjo, maracas, a *rhumba* box (similar to a giant thumb piano) a bass made from a broom and wooden boxes for percussion – ensured it remained a village staple while possessing a charm that appealed both to visiting tourists and international audiences.

The three albums compiled here – by The Jolly Boys, The Prince Brothers and King Vupp (plus more than a dozen tracks from other mento artists) – all hail from the mid-1970s and were produced by Sonia Pottinger, a pioneering Jamaican record producer and label owner. The performances throughout are excellent, very well sung and played with strong vocal harmonies. That some of the tunes here could be passed off as ska or reggae demonstrates how mento had developed rather than remaining an archaic folk music. These recordings were overlooked at the time – roots reggae was at its height – so



Ivan Eblis

Meridian Brothers & Conjunto Media Luna

Paz en la Tierra

Bongo Joe (42 mins)

★★★★★

Colombian experimentalist excels on traditional cumbia collection



Musically, this is the most conventional album of Meridian Brothers main-man Eblis Álvarez's career. Colombia's traditional music has always been a huge part of Álvarez's output, but so often he would delight in playing with convention, last year's *Cumbia Siglo XXI*, a delirious reconfiguration of *cumbia* being a prime example. It was cumbia, but never quite cumbia as we know it. On this collaboration with Bogotá's in-demand accordion player, Iván Medellín of Conjunto Media Luna, he has made the closest to a traditional album he surely will ever make.

Recalling golden-age *vallenato* or the *cumbia campesina* of Andrés Landero, Medellín's strident

accordion is showcased perfectly, as are Álvarez's vocals. This format allows his words to shine better than ever before; these songs feel like modern-day *vallenatos* in the troubadour tradition.

'El Profesionalismo es Importante' (Professionalism is Important) is a semi-ironic tale of needing to be professional to make it in the music business; 'Pensando en Mi Morena' (Thinking of My Brunette) a tongue-in-cheek love song; 'La Secta' a break-neck *puya* about a friend wanting to start a sect for popular vallenato performer Diomedes Díaz. Diverting stuff, and when driven through by accomplished cumbia playing like this, it's hard to find fault.

RUSS SLATER

TRACK TO TRY *La Secta*

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GARTH CARTWRIGHT

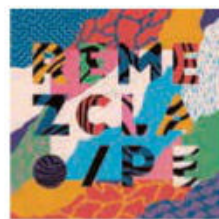
TRACK TO TRY *Dip and Fall Back* by The Jolly Boys

Remezcla/Pe

Selvamonos (68 mins)

★★★★★

Collaboration album remixes Peruvian songwriters



Remezcla is 'remix' in Spanish; *Pe* is the URL country code of Peru. Each of the 15 songs on this compilation album pairs a Latin American DJ with a Peruvian musician; the latter,

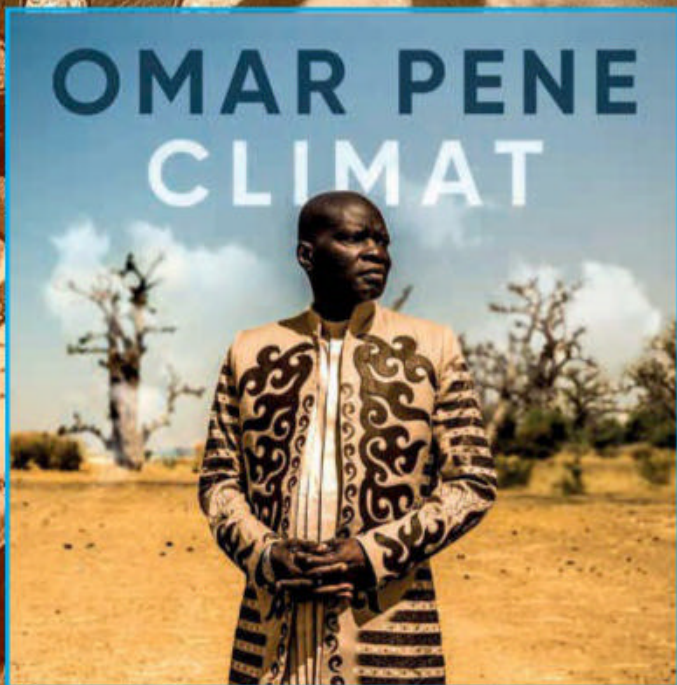
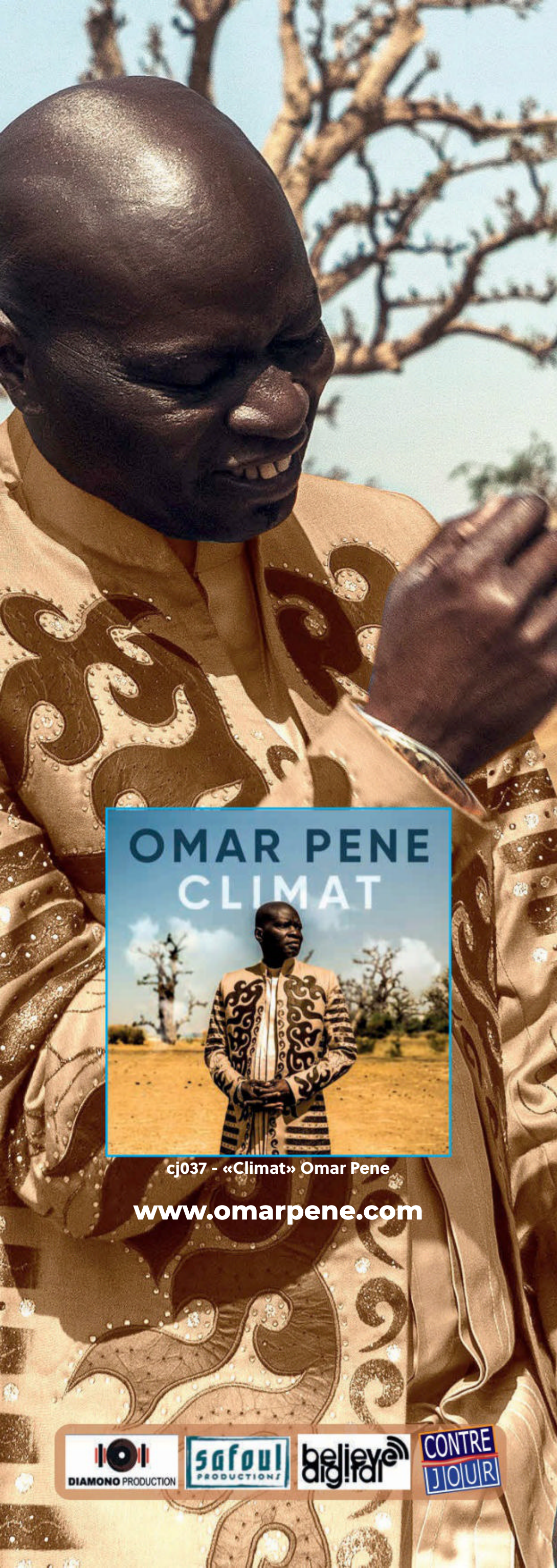
however, are an interesting mix of folk, hip-hop, *cumbia*, tropical psychedelia, Afro-Peruvian and pop artists. What remixers such as Carla Valenti from Chile, El Remolón from Argentina, Bial Hclap from Mexico and Qoqeqa from Peru bring to the fiesta are respectful downtempo treatments (as on 'Harwawi'), spacious soundscapes ('Pregones'), urbane cool ('El Pescador') and experimental exercises ('Festejo de Ritmo').

Each of these don't detract from the original genres but rather reimagine them, meaning you prick up your ears and switch on your brain while swaying darkly around an über-underground Lima nightclub – or your living room in Leicester, etc.

Folk music can sometimes be much of a muchness, trapped in its trad instruments, tight rhythms and conservative clichés. Here artists and geeks unite to spice up the bland, cut up the palimpsest. All the tracks are of interest, that's no small achievement, and the sheer variety of noises, beats, vibes and voices (instrumental and human) ensures you that Gotan Project 'after party' ennui never sets in. The blurb says this Franco-Peruvian production marks the occasion of the bicentennial of the independence of Peru; the *reconquista* is happening, and it's very cool and groovy, *señorxs*.

CHRIS MOSS

TRACK TO TRY *El Pescadito (Rokeya Remix)* by La Patronal



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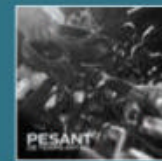
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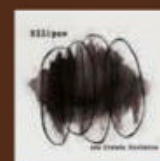
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Aigua Noninó

Microscopi (45 mins)

**Lilting dances from Spanish-Belgian guitar-accordion duo**

Aigua is a duo formed of two contrasting life experiences: guitarist and singer Joan Peiró Aznar

was born in Potríes, Valencia and, after studying classical guitar, jazz and flamenco, has pursued a career dedicated principally to Spanish music. Accordionist Lies Hendrix grew up in Belgium, studied world music at the Academy for Music and Drama in Gothenburg, Sweden, and, according to her own press spiel, has sought her ‘musical identity [on] a journey through traditional flamenco songs, Swedish polkas, Valencian jotás and French bourrée, all seasoned with jazz and musette waltzes.’

For this album, the focus is Aznar’s home turf, and *Noninó* offers us 11 gentle, lilting *habaneras*, *jotas*, *mazurkas* and lullabies. Valencian folk often makes use of the medieval-sounding *dulzaina* (Spanish oboe), but the squeezebox is an effective deliverer of ditties as well as drone effects. A lot of it revolves around dancing, and there are a couple of lively, skipping songs here, including ‘Ja Ve L’horabaixa’ and ‘Borreiada’. Both musicians like to jazz up their style, improvising away from set melodies and rhythms; on ‘Delicate Genius’, Aznar gets stuck into a banging, twanging solo. But the overriding tone is reflective, ruminant, even solemn. If the ‘water’ of the album title is Mediterranean, then this is the sea mainly in autumn and winter – romantic, slow-ebbing, shades of grey.

CHRIS MOSS

TRACK TO TRY *Borreiada***Katy Rose Bennett Alone on a Hill**

Little House on the Hill Records (33 mins)

**An a cappella choir of one**

Katy Rose Bennett has been performing her Americana-tinged style of folk music for the best part of

20 years. She’s brought her music into community and therapeutic settings too, music-making with people who have dementia and working as a music therapist with children with autism

and emotional and behavioural difficulties. She also leads community choir Moseley Voices – her 2020 compilation is aptly titled *Where Does it Hurt?*. One can feel the balm in her music, especially on this album of reflective, self-penned songs, comprising tiered vocals throughout, sometimes laden with echo, sometimes clear and limpid. The album’s lingering spellcraft of multi-layered a cappella vocals is its calling card. The songs were written in the depths of lockdown, in an isolated house on a hill south of Birmingham. She has called it an exercise in self-sufficiency, breathing life into – in her own words – ‘songs of loneliness, isolation, connection, trees, birds, the natural world, the wind, the sun, insomnia, worry, nostalgia, belonging and gratitude for the people and things that have kept me going.’ The likes of ‘Trees’, with its abstract, *Stimmung*-like chorale is especially potent.

TIM CUMMING

TRACK TO TRY *Trees***Caamaño & Ameixeiras Aire!**

Microscopi (42 mins)

**Harmonious debut from Spanish twosome**

Galicia in north-western Spain is a world apart, comparable perhaps to Dingle in Ireland. Folk

music traditions are passed down dynastic lines and the public plazas of Vigo and A Coruña routinely thrum and throb to festivals celebrating Celtic identity. Sabela Caamaño and Antía Ameixeiras are typical products, immersed in their region’s music since primary school age and, while well versed in classical, jazz and other traditions, cleaving fiercely to the music of their homeland.

As two youngish women, they present a fresh face to the scene, and bring vitality and intensity to their compositions. Caamaño plays chromatic accordion, Ameixeiras is in charge of violin and voice; most of the 11 songs are instrumental, and the few vocals are largely of the ‘yayayaya, oh-woah-oh, lelele’ variety. Unsurprisingly, given Galicians’ long seagoing/fishing history, there are several sea shanties, with the squeezebox weaving along a fine line between tragic melancholy and boozy-cheery, as befits a sailor safely returned to shore. ‘Vals de Pasmár’ is a slow-burn waltz that

oozes feeling. ‘Maribel’ is a danceable dirge, by turns sorrowful and sardonic, which packs a punch at its climax. It’s telling, though that the most arresting track, ‘Maneo de Cambre’, features ‘proper’ vocals by Silvia Pérez Cruz and Carola Ortiz’s crooning clarinet. This talented duo’s pared-down harmonies are impressive and taut, but non-specialists might find the tonal range a wee bit narrow.

CHRIS MOSS

TRACK TO TRY *Maneo de Cambre***Granny’s Attic The Brickfields**

Grimdon Records (36 mins)

**Energetic instrumentals offer an ‘in the room’ feel**

This fourth studio album from the British folk trio is one of many albums born out of the pandemic that

finds its essence in the live experience. The musicians felt a need to get back to basics in more ways than one. Firstly, they returned to their roots as an instrumental folk act, and secondly, they sat in a room and just played together. The result is a beautifully intimate collection of instrumentals, blending their own compositions with traditional material. They sought the ‘in the room’ folk session feel and there is a sense that you are only just along the settee from them as they play. This is as far from a tech-driven AI music session as you could come.

The trio is violinist Lewis Wood, Cohen Braithwaite-Kilcoyne on Anglo concertina and melodeon and George Sansome on guitar. On both lively jigs and mournful airs, each instrument is picked out with clarity. The album was made possible by a micro-grant from the English Folk Dance & Song Society, a heartening sign of support for music-making after the long hiatus.

NATHANIEL HANDY

TRACK TO TRY *Considerate Birders***Grupi Lab Live at TUSK 2019**

TUSK Editions (56 mins)

**Albanian iso-polyphony captured live**

Recorded at the eclectic TUSK Festival in Gateshead, this live set captures the last night of the

first ever UK tour by a group performing southern Albanian iso-polyphony, a form of traditional folk singing that originated 3,000 years ago. These ancient shepherds’ songs centre on the brisk, husky bark of group leader, the charismatic Golik Jaupi – a national hero who was officially titled ‘Artist of the People’ during Albania’s 50-year dictatorship.

While Jaupi delivers elemental tales of love and sorrow, his six group-mates unfurl an astonishingly rich, thick and powerful supporting drone (known as the iso), seeded with extraordinary vocal effects that mimic the natural sounds of the Albanian mountains – the chirrup of crickets, the distant hooting of an owl and so on. At other times, another singer will step forward and take the lead role, while Jaupi melts into the group drone. In truth, the voices meld so beautifully that it’s hard to keep track of who’s doing what: it’s best simply to let the sound wash over you. Be prepared to keep hitting fast forward, though, to skip through the spoken commentary between each song. The music speaks for itself, loud and clear.

DANIEL SPICER

TRACK TO TRY *Janines Ç’i Panë Sytë***HEISK HEISK**

HEISK (35 mins)

**Dance tent-ready trad**

Punchy drums, electronic flourishes, ear-catching grooves: this is instrumental

trad-inspired tunes taken out of the pub and elevated to the dance tent, complete with disco lights and smoke machine. Indeed, there is a track called ‘Disco’, where catwalk beats saunter through sophisticated keys before the fiddles and accordion burst in and attempt to steal the show. Sophie Ellis-Bextor would be proud. ‘Rushin’ takes the Monster Ceilidh Band approach to fiddle-driven dance, with pounding bass adding menace and upbeat drums telling us when to kick off our shoes, while the opening of ‘Grethy’ sets the scene with electronica.

If the above sounds like a cacophonous stunt, an attempt to fuse unlikely genres, then be reassured: these are musicians that know exactly what they’re doing. The arrangements are neat, beautifully textured, and have evolved out of a diet of myriad influences, including pop, jazz and,

yes, disco. But the careful consideration doesn't stop at the music: it extends out to the team behind the scenes, with an all-woman cast of producers, engineers, and promoters. This is a package that has been given great thought and it deserves great recognition in response. There is much more to come from HEISK – you'll be glad you caught them at the beginning.

SOPHIE PARKES

TRACK TO TRY *Grethy*

MISST MISST.EU!

-I-C-U-B4-T- (52 mins)

★★★★★

Five fine voices take on forgotten folk songs



This Belgian harmony group constitutes 'five voices – four misses and a mister.'

Having represented

Flanders at the 2017 Ferrara Buskers Festival in Italy with a remit of 'somewhat forgotten folk songs from all over this world,' you can hear MISST's pure a cappella roots on the beautiful final tracks of this debut album, 'Libera Me' and 'Verlangen'.

They sing in Flemish, French and 14 other languages, celebrating the 'rich cultural diversity of Europe' while adding instrumentation to contrast the traditional and the modern. A plethora of influences coalesce: added *uilleann* pipes lend 'Repülj Madar' and 'Levame' a Gaelic feel; on 'Sensualitat', the beautiful harmonies and affecting lead vocal are given a light, jazzy backing of double bass, brushed drums and muted trumpet; male vocalist Jan Van Rossem's prominent guitar suggests the caustic touch of Justin Adams on 'Este Linho' and the rousing 'Ergen Deda'. After the a cappella introduction to the opening track and third single, 'Sur l'Eau', the initial taste of electric guitar and drums is somewhat jolting and the song's climax sounds like Finnish folk group Värttinä meets Fleetwood

Mac. Such occasional incongruous moments convince less than when these 'four misses and a mister' sing simply in stirring unison.

MARK SAMPSON

TRACK TO TRY *Este Linho*

Multumult Now and Then

The Lollipoppe Shoppe (68 mins)

★★★★★

Electric offerings from Romanian improvisors



The term 'world music' has become increasingly vague over the years, and although this recording, from a

trio of Romanian instrumental and literary artists, could be loosely described as such, the reference points are not Bregović, TPOK Jazz, or Yo Yo Ma. Instead, touchstones include The Necks, Evan Parker and Slowly Rolling Camera, with intimations of the Romanian Spectralist movement a more distant presence.

The quartet – wind instruments, violin, electronics and percussion – work with folk-flavoured themes, taking a highly improvisatory approach, with structures emerging incrementally over the course of the piece. As an example, 'Când Era în Vremea Mea' opens with a series of drones, first as pulsing electronics rich in harmonics, joined by violin, with a strange insectile rattle of percussion, leading to a Phrygian-mode melody on clarinet, then a distant vocal, drenched in echo and reverb. It is not until halfway through the 13-minute piece that a drum pattern appears, underscoring a weave of slow instrumental meditations, enriched by electronic processing. At this point the texture has become so dense that it is impossible to be sure whether you are hearing electronics, a treated instrument, or an acoustic instrument being played unconventionally. A fascinating and thoughtful recording.

KIM BURTON

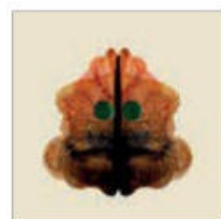
TRACK TO TRY *Maneava din Clejani*

Naaljos Ljom Naaljos Ljom

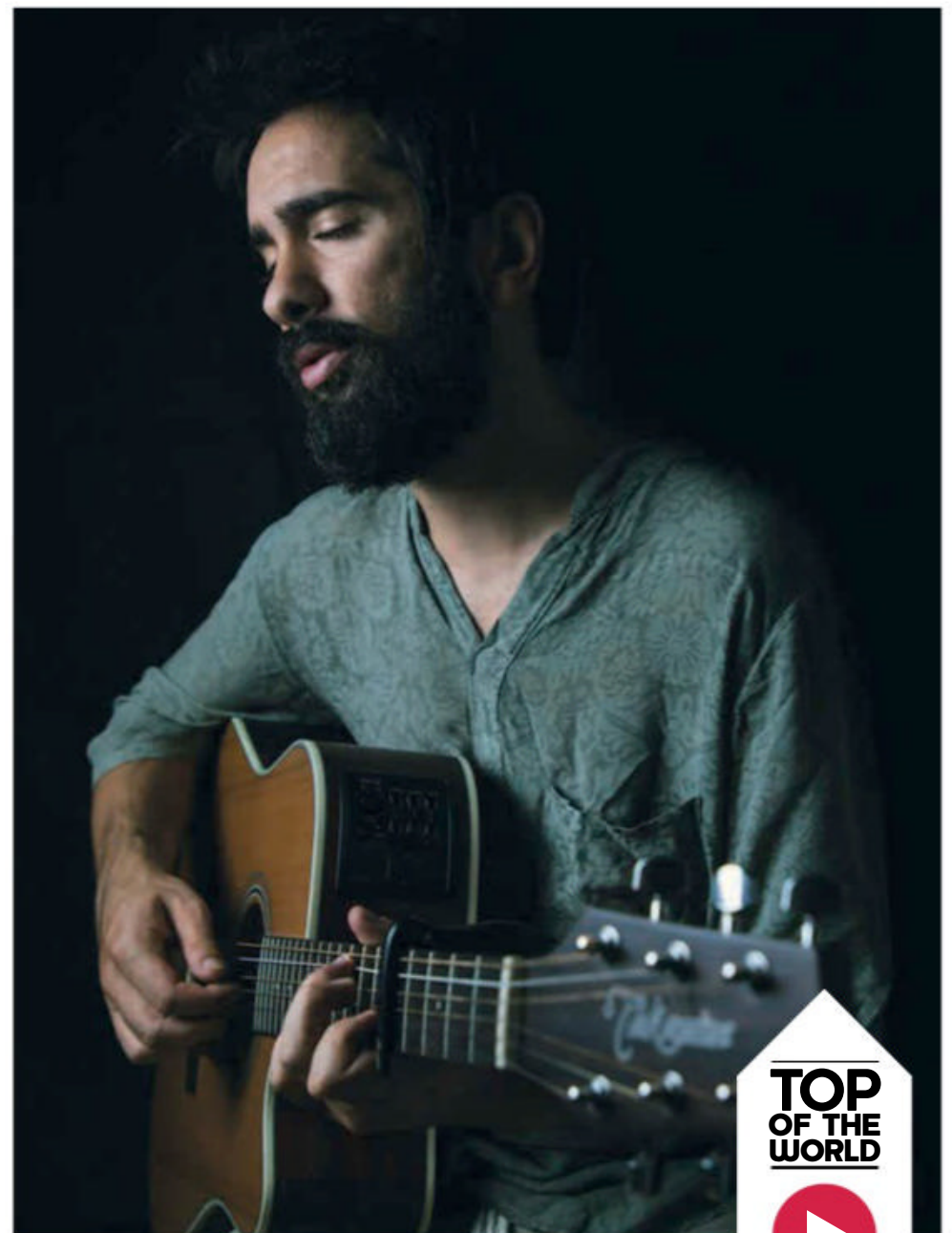
Rotvind Records (36 mins)

★★★★★

Modern microtonal magic



I like my Norwegian folk music with an earthy, gritty, dirt under the fingernails sort of



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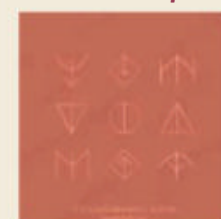
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Davide Ambrogio Evocazioni e Invocazioni

Calatea (36 mins)

★★★★★

Rituals, raps and lullabies



Ancient resonances tinge Davide Ambrogio's timbre. He is a Calabrian singer

and multi-instrumentalist – guitars, Calabrian lyre, *zampogna* (bagpipes), electronics and percussion – from the mountainous Aspromonte area. His debut (which translates as 'Evocations and Invocations') is a melodic and rhythmic exploration of his home dialect, intertwining acoustic instruments and electronics, tradition and sound design, singing and spoken word.

Belonging to a generation of cutting-edge artists (he's a member of the adventurous *LinguaMadre*) it's no surprise he's more aligned with Kate Tempest's artistry than the canon of the folk revivalists. The nine tracks here emerge from the idea of following the aesthetic

and ecstatic dimension of sound. Ritual-like chants, celebrations, lullabies, protest songs, laments and spells create an ancestral connection. Opener 'A Sant' Andrea' touches on ideas of memory and the sense of belonging, while 'A San Rocco' displays a percussive ostinato of pencil-plucked guitar before launching into a *zampogna*-led trance-inducing dance. 'A San Michele' is a lament, an explosive cry of conscious rage against the 'Ndrangheta criminal organisation. Elsewhere, on 'Veniti Sonnu', a lullaby originally recorded by Alan Lomax, crystal clear arpeggios and layered singing lead to an eerie atmospheric theme. On 'Canto dal Carcere' spoken word and rap explore isolation and the suspended time of an inmate. Ambrogio is an innovative artist forging new paths to reconnect past and present.

CIRO DE ROSA

TRACK TO TRY *A San Rocco*

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sound. I wasn't expecting this from duo Naaljos Ljom but, as I listened, I was transported to secluded valleys where age-old traditions are the passionate expressions of a community, here re-energised by the chillingly sensitive electronic wizardry of Anders Hana and Morten Joh. The pair bring their own experience of much-lauded noise bands MoHa! and Ultralyd along with understanding and curiosity. They add fiddle, jaw harp, and the zither-like *langeleik* (whose sounds are buffeted from *sitar* to micro-tonal guitar) to their extensive sound palette, for foot-tapping dance tunes, hymns and ballads. Olav Christer 'Laffen' Rossebø guests on fiddle alongside singer

Kenneth Lien, reminding us of the treasure-trove of traditional singers in the Norwegian folk archives.

The album belongs to the series *Perspectives on Norwegian Folk Music*. Brilliantly thought through, it celebrates the excellent and extensive folk archives, which continue to inspire many contemporary musicians. Back in the 1920s and 30s, composer, performer and radio producer Eivind Groven was intrigued by microtonality in Norwegian folk traditions; Naaljos Ljom have taken his thoughts and spun them into a new dimension, making for some deeply compelling listening.

FIONA TALKINGTON

TRACK TO TRY *Galne Visten*

Naragonia The Guesthouse Sessions

Trad Records (54 mins)

★★★★★

Bal folk pair bring in pals for post-lockdown collaboration



Lockdown has proved a rich creative experience for the Belgian *bal* folk duo, diatonic accordionists

Pascale Rubens and Toon Van Mierlo.

Naragonia have been around for 18 years, with an established reputation on the Belgian and European bal folk scene. They decided to phone up some of the many musical friends they've made over the years and get

them – in the spirit of these post-pandemic times – in for a jam. Many of the collaborators appeared on their last record, such as members of the extended Van Mierlo family, trumpeter Mathijs and vocalist Charlotte, and saxophonist Philippe Laloy, pianist Véronique Rubens and guitarist Maarten Decombel.

The regulars make it questionable how much of a new project *The Guesthouse Sessions* actually is, but the spirit of these bal folk stalwarts is certainly not diminished by the passing years. They continue to create a rich, varied soundscape that is unafraid to explore new textures and styles, as on the pulsating, souring 'Alio' with its trembling, discordant guitar and shimmering percussion, and the cinematic, avant-garde accordion sounds of 'FC Burns'.

NATHANIEL HANDY

TRACK TO TRY *Alio*

Nytt Land Ritual

Napalm Records (47 mins)

★★★★★

Shamanic rhythms from frostbitten Siberia



Describing their music as shamanic dark folk, Nytt Land are a Siberian duo – Natasha 'Baba Yaga'

Pakhlenko and Anatoly 'Shaman' Pakhelenko – who, between them, deploy drums, flutes, mouth harps and a good deal of throat singing. *Ritual* is their seventh studio album and the opening title-track sets the scene, with sounds of raven calls followed by urgent drumming and guttural vocals. Natasha's layered harmonies are effective and provide some relief from the monotone of Anatoly's throat singing, which makes 'Ritual' sound oddly like a shamanic version of Plastic Bertrand's 'Ça Plane Pour Moi'. 'The Birth of a Shaman' is vocally and melodically more adventurous while the dark-yet-danceable 'Dead Man's Dance', with its flute and wide-ranging vocals, reminded me of pagan folksters PerKelt.

There are similarities with Norwegian band Warduna, thematically and in terms of instrumentation. Both draw on Norse mythology and make use of the *tagelharpa* (bowed lyre). But, judging by this album at least, Nytt Land lack Warduna's sonic variety and authenticity so that, rather than being atmospheric and engaging,

Katy J Pearson & Maudlin who perform 'Willie of Winsbury'



Broadside Hacks Songs Without Authors Vol 1

Broadside Hacks Recordings (65 mins)

★★★★★

London collective give a fresh face to old favourites



Every emerging folk singer likes to think their interpretation offers the listener a chance to hear, to think, something new: an unexpected pause, a surprising meander in a well-worn melody, a brave emphasis on a much-sung phrase. But how often do we truly hear a 'Barbara Allen' or a 'Willie of Winsbury' that manages to not only spark our weary ears but also feel a genuine part of the zeitgeist? Broadside Hacks, a London-based collective, might have, in this volume, put out something very special indeed. Among the cast there are names familiar to the contemporary folk scene – Lankum's Daragh Lynch and Yorkston/Thorne/Khan – but there

are also bands more closely associated with the indie world, like Katy J Pearson. It is this diversity that gives this compilation such brave, full-bodied and enjoyable renditions of the songs we thought we knew.

Asha Lorenz of Sorry's deadpan exasperation is very much at home in 'I Don't Feel at Home in This World', while Aga Ujma's vocal aerobatics in 'Uwoz Mamo Roz (Tell Me, Mother)' has us reaching for the replay button. This album might prove an introduction to folk song, and for us seasoned listeners, the chance to remind ourselves of why we listen in the first place.

SOPHIE PARKES

TRACK TO TRY *The True Lover's Farewell* feat Brigid Mae Power

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Ritual ends up sounding repetitive, overblown and bombastic.

TONY GILLAM

TRACK TO TRY *Ritual*

Francesc Sans L'infini

Microscopi (41 mins)

★★★★★

Cornamusa tunes go beyond the classic contexts



Francesc Sans is a much travelled Catalan player of the *cornamusa*, a type of *gaita* or bagpipes

(*cornemuse* in French). It's an instrument mostly associated with traditional music in Mallorca, but on this, his first album under his own name, Sans makes a point of showing the wide range of contexts he plays in.

He is accompanied by vocalists and a whole range of instruments including guitars, accordion, keyboards, strings, percussion and, on several tracks, the *flabiol*, a recorder-like wooden flute. This array of sounds and contexts is both the strength and weakness of the record. The music itself is mostly based on simple, repetitive themes and the diverse accompaniment provides much needed variety. On the other hand, there is a baffling lack of coherence to the mix. 'Dolors Gegants' is a melancholic cello and piano duo until suddenly a cornamusa jig bursts in. At its best, as in 'A les Fosques Pel Call', the album offers an opportunity to hear the little-known cornamusa in a sympathetic setting. If only they had let it speak for itself more.

JO SETTERS

TRACK TO TRY *A les Fosques Pel Call*

Spiers & Boden Fallow Ground

Hudson Records (58 mins)

★★★★★

Brit folk goliaths return with first album in a decade



Spiers & Boden have had a defining role in 21st-century British folk, from their early years with Eliza Carthy's

Ratcatchers, as the original building blocks of the mighty Bellowhead, and in their own right. Both have had busy solo and band careers since *The Works* (2011), which itself was a celebration of a decade's collaborations. Ten years on, they return with *Fallow Ground*, a reference to having put their duo work

out to grass, but also a reference to the impact COVID-19 has had on live music. Unlike the guest-bestrewn 2011 release, *Fallow Ground* features Spiers & Boden alone, just voice, fiddle, melodeon and concertina. It opens with gems from Peter Bellamy – a huge influence on Boden and whose spirit can be heard in the dramatic range of Boden's vocal techniques. The songs are interspersed with tune sets comprising lost morris numbers, Cornish dances, stalwarts from Playford's *The Dancing Master* of 1651, and a few self-penned pieces, including the lovely closer 'Bailey Hill / Wittenham Clumps'. Among the songs, a standout is 'Reynardine', with its inexorable narrative dragged like a pelt over the circling tune they bring to the table. This is an album that goes in deep and brings out riches aplenty.

TIM CUMMING

TRACK TO TRY *Reynardine*

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Fire Draw Near

River Lea (43 mins)

★★★★★

Trad podcast compilation is a compendium of curiosities



Fire Draw Near is a bewitching baker's dozen of often rough and raw but altogether relishable

recordings. Compiled by Lankum's Ian Lynch, the selection suggests Rough Trade's River Lea imprint is on a roll, following John Francis Flynn's *I Would Not Live Always*.

Stretching from 1947 to 2013 and recorded in bars, living rooms, campsites and studios, each track, drawn from Lynch's similarly titled (and recommendable) monthly podcast, rings out with a deep-rooted authenticity marvellous to behold. Connemara Traveller family The Rainey's get things off to a flying start with the raucous fiddle-driven 'Woman of the House', Dubliner Tommy Reck's 'The Kilfrush / The Trip to Durrow' is an almost casually thrown-off display of virtuoso piping, and Clare woman Nora Cleary dispatches 'The Codfish' with a becomingly cheeky directness of spirit. Connemara exile Joe Heaney's 'Amhrán na hEascainne' is *sean nós* singing at its purest, while there are fine examples of English-lyric tradition from Dubliners' Frank Harte ('The Finding of Moses') and Luke

Cheevers ('Ulysses'), Tom Lenihan's delightfully antique and rustic 'Paddy's Panacea', and Joe Holmes' lilting, County Antrim-accented 'The Dark Eyed Gypsy'. It's to be hoped that Lynch's podcast, now in its third year, has plenty more treasures to reveal in future volumes.

MICHAEL QUINN

TRACK TO TRY *Paddy's Panacea* by Tom Lenihan

Stand Up Now: Songs from the Landworkers' Alliance

Many a Thousand Records (60 mins)

★★★★★

Folks songs evoking beautiful landscapes and nature



The canon of British folk song is rich with stories and beautiful evocations of landscape, nature,

country life and work. That they are mostly sung by people whose own lives are distant from these is an inevitable anomaly: the rural population of the UK is about 11 million, the urban population about 56 million. *Stand Up Now* bucks the trend: the Landworkers' Alliance, a union of small-scale growers, brought 'farmers with a song in their back pocket,' such as Essex trio King Driscolls, together with simpatico jobbing musicians, including Nick Hart and Ewan McLennan. The record was produced by musician Sid Goldsmith, recording in cow sheds and barns across the land, capturing their songs of agricultural life.

Amy Cox and Maddy Yarwood sing 'Oak and Ash and Thorn', Rudyard Kipling's paean to great trees, in lovely harmony, with arboreal double bass. These people live on the land and sing too of its harsh realities. 'Sing Ivy', performed by Kerry Ann Jangle and Theo Passingham, is all about hard labour for small return – a harvest that will fit in a walnut shell. Eggclub 7 give 'Lark in the Morning' a feminist reworking, ending with '*nothing lives in freedom in a world that's ruled by blokes*.' 'Trecadwgan' tells the story of that farm in Wales, which the local community fought to buy, only to be outbid at auction by outsiders. It's not all gloom; 'The Ballad of Hawkwood' is the happy story of an urban farm, *I'll be good to the land and the land will be good to me*. These musicians tend and nurture these songs with such simple care, and the songs repay this love.

JULIAN MAY

TRACK TO TRY *Sing Ivy* by Young Waters

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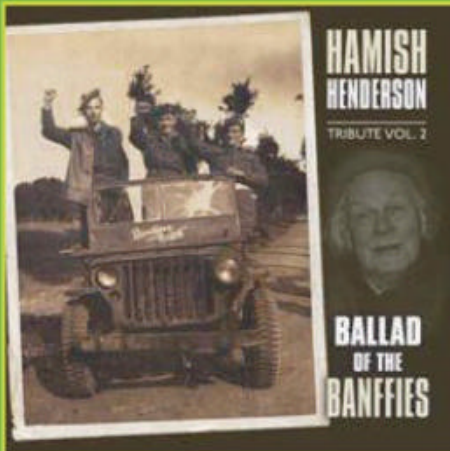


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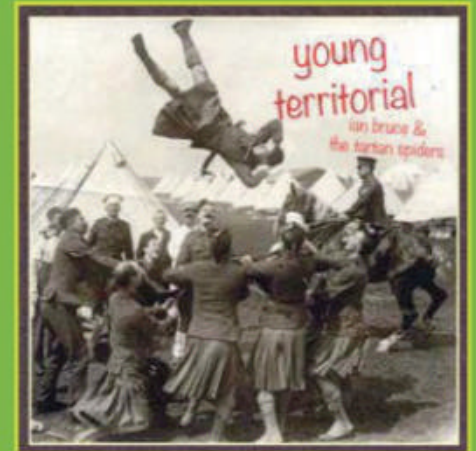
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Altın Gün Âlem

ATO Records/Glitterbeat Records (38 mins)



Psych-folk sextet makes the jump to electro-pop



While Amsterdam-based sextet Altın Gün are known as 21st-century purveyors of Turkish psych-folk,

their last album, *Yol*, released in February this year, marked a decisive shift away from the classic 70s sound, incorporating synths and drum machines for a more luxuriant, 80s dream pop feel. With this follow-up, they've burrowed even further in that direction with a suite of catchy tunes that pay homage to electronic pop music from the 80s and early 90s.

A handful of original compositions clearly demonstrate the fun they're having: the gentle reggae lilt of 'Kısasa Kısas' feels like the quintessential Euro-pop soundtrack to an endless, imaginary summer holiday. But it's their imaginative interpretations of Turkish folk standards that really stand out. 'Badi Sabah Olmadan' wraps electric *saz* and microtonal synth squiggles around a hypnotic bass squelch that feels like a Kraftwerk-inspired cousin of Donna Summer's 'I Feel Love'; while 'Çarşambayı Sel Aldı' smothers gorgeously languid pedal steel guitar and Erdinç Ecevit's yearning vocals over a sparse rhythm track that nods to Marvin Gaye's 'Sexual Healing'. The fact that these traditional songs feel so fresh is testament to both Altın Gün's cheeky creativity and the eternal appeal of the source material.

DANIEL SPICER

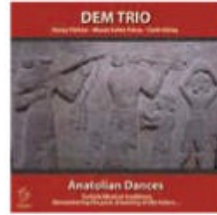
TRACK TO TRY *Badi Sabah Olmadan*

Dem Trio Anatolian Dances

Felmay (58 mins)



Wedding dance favourites return to their roots



It is interesting to see and hear how Turkish wedding dances have changed over the years. From slow

and decorous to high-octane 'turbo folk,' these 20 tracks offer a rare glimpse of – mainly – wedding music from Anatolia before it became infused with techno and Western disco influences. The old *halays*, for instance, represented here by two shoulder-to-shoulder line dances – one from Van in the south-east and the other from central Anatolia – are intricate, delicate affairs, a far cry from the pumped-up, hyperactive halays, which are nevertheless so fun at modern Turkish and Kurdish weddings. The *zeybek* of western Anatolia and the Aegean is represented here by nine very different tracks, also wraiths of what they would later become. Usually only men perform this Greek influenced dance, with arms held high, in a *Zorba the Greek* manner, and feet kicking outwards. Some of these tracks are dead ringers for more mature and elaborated tunes. Like for instance 'Oduncular Dağdan Odun İndirir', a fine and melancholy love song with some impossibly wistful *ney* playing trailing off at the end. On the CD cover it says, '*remembering the past, dreaming of the future.*' That is all well and good, but this reviewer doesn't see Turkish wedding music returning to its roots any time soon. While these tracks have their undeniable charm, they would be dead boring on the dance floor for young Turkish wedding guests avid for any form of kicks.

ROBERT RIGNEY

TRACK TO TRY *Oduncular Dağdan Odun İndirir*

Tülay German & François Rabbath Tülay German & François Rabbath

Zehra (38 mins)



Turkish pop innovator offers a twist on traditional tunes



Vocalist Tülay German cut her teeth as a jazz singer in Istanbul nightclubs in the early 60s before

bursting onto the Anatolian pop scene in 1964 with 'Burçak Tarlası', the first of a string of hits. However, like many Turkish artists of her generation, she felt the pinch of repressive government, and immigrated to France in 1966, where she reinvented herself as the Francophone *chanteuse* Toulai. By 1980, she'd reverted to her mother tongue, teaming up with Syrian-born French double bassist François Rabbath to cut this debut album that same year.

For her repertoire, she delved into the well of songs traditionally sung by the wandering *aşık* bards, as well as the work of persecuted communist poet Nâzım Hikmet. The influence of Turkish classical music is clearly present in German's lachrymose swoops and swoons, while her solemn intonation and precise diction grant her the kind of authority heard in folk legend Ruhi Su's recordings. Rabbath's simple arrangements of unadorned *saz* and supple double bass suggest a Turkish take on the jazz-folk innovations of Pentangle but this is, at heart, a collection of laments firmly in the tradition, imbued with the longing of exile.

DANIEL SPICER

TRACK TO TRY *Leylim Ley*

Kolektif Istanbul Kismet

Trikont (51 mins)



Celebratory songs from the lively ensemble



Since their debut as Kolektif Istanbul, *Krivoto* (which came out nearing the peak of the Balkan hype in

2008), the group haven't changed all that much. These 13 mostly infectious dance tunes are still keeping to the same Turko-Balkan territory, though French sax player and totally Turkified bandleader Richard Laniece prefers the term 'progressive wedding music' to describe what the band are all about. The difference between then and now is the Kolektif sound has become busier, tighter, more versatile, with subtle trills, flourishes and embellishments. Also the retrograde electric piano is a welcome addition, sounding at times totally un-Balkan, and then a moment later verging on a kind of funky, microtonal Balkan *tallava* – a style popular at Roma weddings.

While some of the best tracks are the fast-paced, stomping Turkish-Bulgarian-inspired *köçeks* replete with pumping tuba and swooping

sax and clarinet figures, a standout is the slow, crawling 'Aksaray'dan Geçer İken'. Originally a Gypsy style *meyhane* drinking tune in a *dügah makam* (Turkish folk melody), the song is orchestrated here with some darkly atmospheric and distorted electro *tambur* licks and Aslı Doğan's swooning lament that sounds like it was lifted from the refrain of that old traditional Thracian Greek-Turkish number in 9/8, 'Mastika'. Overall, Kolektif Istanbul offer up a much different – reedier, more Oriental – take on the Balkan sound than the more dominant Romanian cliché.

ROBERT RIGNEY

TRACK TO TRY *Pirinsko Köçek*

Coşkun Karademir, Tord Gustavsen, Derya Türkan & Ömer Arslan Silence

Kalan Müzik (68 mins)



Lute-master offers up the sound of Silence



A master of the traditional Turkish long-neck lutes, Coşkun Karademir has released several remarkably

adventurous recordings. With The Secret Ensemble and by himself he recorded two splendid albums with Iranian singer Mahsa Vahdat. His jazzy album, *Kerbela*, is dedicated to the holy city of Shia Islam. On *Silence* he is joined by Norwegian pianist Tord Gustavsen, Derya Türkan on *kemençe* and Ömer Arslan on percussion.

The opening track, 'Gondol', starts with Gustavsen's piano, then the *kemençe* sets in, followed by subtle percussion, creating an evocative backdrop for Karademir's gently strummed lute. Track two, 'Sırdaş', is the opposite: fast, ecstatic, reminiscent of the drive of some of Dhafer Youssef's 'spiritual trance' music. These contrasting elements return in 'Zahit Bizi Tan Eyleme', with a soft-spoken opening on the lute, before a heavy low drum appears, speeding up the tempo, followed by the *kemençe* and finally the piano, all weaving into an almost funky groove.

The album was recorded in Istanbul after a concert in late 2019. It was one of the last overseen by Hasan Saltık, the legendary founder of Kalan Müzik, who passed away this June; the August/September 2021 (#170) issue had his obituary.

NEIL VAN DER LINDEN

TRACK TO TRY *Sırdaş*



Kolektif Istanbul

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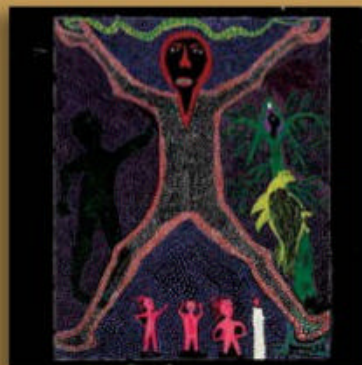
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HAMDI BENANI MEHDI HADDAB SPEED CARAVAN *Nuba Nova*

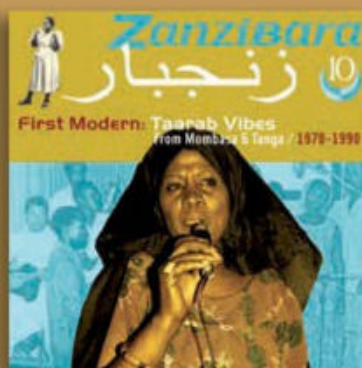
The title rings out like a manifesto. Think of it as a transgressive descendant of Algerian classical music : Malouf from Annaba revisited !



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BALKAN TAKSIM *Disco Telegraf*

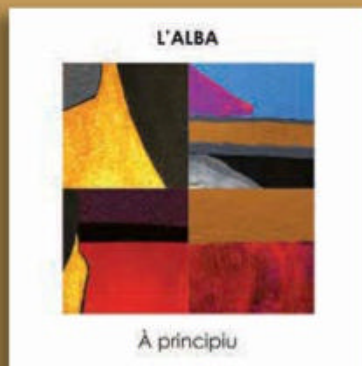
Fuzzed-out electro saz from Romanian duo : the Bucharest-based multi-instrumentalist Saşa-Liviu Stoianovici along with his electronica producer companion Alin Zăbrăuțeanu.



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Kutcha Edwards Circling Time

Wantok Musik (48 mins)

★★★★★

Heartfelt personal journey



A veteran of the Aboriginal music scene since 1991, Mutti Mutti man Edwards has been a key member of

several influential groups, including Blackfire and The Black Arm Band. He's also previously released four solo albums, featuring his own brand of hometown 'Bidgee' blues, from the Murrumbidgee River region on the NSW-Victoria border. A member of the Stolen Generations (Aboriginal children forcibly removed from their parents by the government), Edwards' music has always contained deep expressions of hurt and loss, but also equal portions of personal healing and redemption. With his strong voice and heartfelt delivery, his albums and performances are moving experiences.

This new collection of songs opens with the anthemic ballad 'Singing Up Country', featuring traditional language vocals from Gunnai educator Wayne Thorpe. 'Mrs Edwards' is a touching tribute to the musician's mother, and the mournful 'Homeless' speaks for itself. But the album's centrepiece is the epic 'We Sing', which features a 100-strong choir including well-known Indigenous singers Archie Roach, Emma Donovan, Joe Geia and Emily Wurramara. Beautifully produced by Andy Stewart, this extends Edwards' solid reputation further, continuing his journey of highlighting justice, heritage and forgiveness.

SETH JORDAN

TRACK TO TRY *We Sing*

Fat Freddy's Drop Wairunga

The Drop (53 mins)

★★★★★

Live funky Kiwi soul



Fat Freddy's Drop have been favourites on the local scene for two decades while also building a

considerable global following. Their perfect party-festival groove combines funky jams with touches of Māori soul, reggae and dub-electronics, and the band's shows have a deserved reputation for delivering the goods. FFD's 2020 live album-video *LOCK-IN*, performed to an empty Wellington concert hall, filled a gap in the band's

non-touring schedule. But now with an eye to getting back out on the road asap, they return with *Wairunga*, consisting of five fresh tracks and two re-worked past tunes. Again delivered live *sans* audience, but this time in a bush setting, the green backdrop provides some organic energy.

Alternately laid-back and pumping hard, the set unfolds gradually, with 'Coffee Black' and 'Wairunga Blues' both featuring soulful singer Dallas Tamaira in fine form. 'Bush Telegraph' is a reggae romp showcasing rapper MC Slave, while the mega 'Leave Your Window Open' and pulsing 'Dig Deep' allow beatmaster-producer Fitchie (aka Mu) to unleash his full techno arsenal. As always the Freddy horn section swings with punch throughout. *Wairunga* may not head in radically new directions for FFD, but hey bro if it ain't broke...

SETH JORDAN

TRACK TO TRY *Dig Deep*

Maisey Rika Ngā Mata o te Ariki Tāwhirimātea

First Nation Music - Aotearoa (35 mins)

★★★★★

Māori journey to the stars



After growing up singing with her mother and aunties, award-winning Māori vocalist Maisey

Rika began performing professionally at age 13. Her first recording, 1997's *E Hine* was a collection of traditional Māori *waiata* (songs) recorded with her school choir, and she was quickly recognised as a unique talent with a stunningly beautiful voice.

Four albums on, Rika's latest release portrays the sacred stories of the nine-star cluster Matariki (aka The Pleiades), and what each star represents to Māori people. Rising in midwinter, Matariki heralds the start of a new year, and is an abbreviation of *Ngā Mata o te Ariki Tāwhirimātea* (The Eyes of the Wind God). To bring the stars' individual characteristics to life, Rika collaborated with different producers on each track, including respected NZ musician-producers Tiki Taane, Horomona Horo, Seth Haapu, Anna Coddington and Mara TK. Rika's crystal-clear voice continually soars on songs like 'Matariki I Te Pō' and 'Tāwhirimātea', while redefining gentleness itself on 'Waiti Waitā' and 'Pōhutukawa'. A lovely triumph.

SETH JORDAN

TRACK TO TRY *Waiti Waitā*



Australian Art Orchestra, Daniel Wilfred, David Wilfred, Sunny Kim, Peter Knight & Aviva Endean Hand to Earth

AAO Recordings (45 mins)

★★★★★

An exquisite combination of ancient and modern sounds



A collaboration initiated by the Melbourne-based Australian Art Orchestra, *Hand to Earth* is

an adventurously creative project. The Australian Art Orchestra's artistic director, trumpeter-composer-sound artist Peter Knight teams up with indigenous Arnhem Land songman Daniel Wilfred and his brother David Wilfred on *yidaki* (didgeridoo), along with Korean vocalist Sunny Kim and Australian Art Orchestra clarinet and flute player Aviva Endean. Founded in 1994 by jazz pianist Paul Grabowsky, the multi-award-winning orchestra is one of the country's leading contemporary ensembles, with a long history of cutting-edge composition and performance.

Developed during an Australian Art Orchestra residency in remote Tasmania, the core of this new project is the ancestral *manikay*

(song cycles) of the Yolgnu people, the Aboriginal custodians of a 40,000-year-old oral tradition based in south-east Arnhem Land. Almost surprisingly, Daniel's remarkable traditional voice blends seamlessly with Kim's more improvisational Asian-based vocals on the tracks 'Guguk' and 'Nunguryu Nunguryu', while Knight's electronically-enhanced ambient trumpet merges easily with the pulsing bed drone of David's yidaki. Elsewhere Endean's woodwind contributions gently weave additional sound colours into the 'Birrik Birrik' mix.

While many contemporary projects strive to combine ancient and modern influences, this innovative and ethereal musical alliance actually achieves that lofty goal – with old cultural ground being respected, while new artistic ground is broken. *Hand to Earth* is a truly exquisite album.

SETH JORDAN

TRACK TO TRY *Guguk*

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AMAMI Soleil

Bongo Joe (36 mins)

★★★★★

Filling dancefloors from Eritrea to Switzerland



AMAMI are a Geneva-based three-piece who strive to combine dancehall, Afro pop and no wave.

Soleil boasts so much; there are rhythmic and melodic nods to Gnawa, *funaná* and ragga throughout this wonky, leftfield collection of electronica. The opener 'Highway Dehli' is sung in Tigrinya (a language from Eritrea, home of the group's singer, Gabriel Ghebrezghi) and throws the listener immediately into one of those strobe-lit underground rooms that we all miss so much. Ghebrezghi describes the song as 'a shout from the heart... filled with joy, sadness, nostalgia and rebellio[n], as it encourages Eritreans... to [remember] where they came from.'

After an exceptionally strong start, for the rest of the album we're sonically thrown around from city to city with the help of Raphaël Anker, who *Songlines* readers will know from Imperial Tiger Orchestra. *Soleil* anchors listeners to the dance floor with thumping drum machines and gritty bass (courtesy of Inès Mouzoune), and drives us to wiggly dancing by pitch-shifted keyboards (from Ghebrezghi) wailing out North African melodies. Another grand success from cult label Bongo Joe, who have long been nurturing the Geneva scene and representing music from Switzerland and beyond. I can't wait for the tour.

CHARLOTTE ALGAR

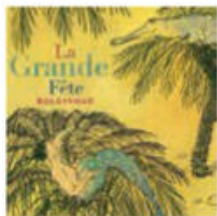
TRACK TO TRY *Highway Dehli*

Belcirque La Grande Fête

ARC Music (43 mins)

★★★★★

Barbershop band feels a little like background noise



From its opening, soothing *ooooh-oooohs*, the third album from Belcirque has a clean, elegant

sound. That might be due to the choice of a greenhouse for the recording sessions, or maybe it's just that the Belgian band – born from high school friendships as a street-performing five-piece, now a

well-synched septet – have a clear vision of what they want to achieve.

Over 13 tracks, their 'big feast' of music has some South American rhythms, mixed with slow swing, folksy touches, African guitar licks and North American blues grooves. For all the ingredients, it's never busy or baggy, nor even that tasty. The band, packed with talent, always opts for crisp melodies, softly stroked percussion and smooth bass lines. A quasi-barbershop schtick means voice is usually to the fore, but often shared between three or four mouths. 'L'Homme' starts like a stark Brel number, with moodily plucked strings, but is soon punctuated by soft, stirring harmonies. 'The Anchor' is almost spoken word, with a looser jazz quality. 'Petit Chemin' is a minor-key, almost noir-ish *chanson*, with lead singer Astrid Creve given a bit of room to emote. But all the compositions work more as word paintings than rousing songs; this is no singalong experience. The whole package has a hotel lounge, background music feel that is never as dull as mere muzak, but, with so many talented musicians vying to tell their story, it can seem a bit rootless and rudderless.

CHRIS MOSS

TRACK TO TRY *Petit Chemin*

Mark Cain Cameos

Paranthèses Records (44 mins)

★★★★★

Decade-spanning selection uses every tool in the box



Mark Cain lives in Fremantle, Australia, and specialises in a highly impressive number of reed and

other wind instruments, as well as having a sideline in percussion objects. This solo collection features 18 tracks, many of them between one and two minutes in length, and steadily recorded over the last decade.

Besides the familiar soprano and baritone saxophones, Cain also makes many of his own blowing devices, with several pieces also featuring Indonesian *gamelan* parts. The brevity of the tracks underlines something of a demonstration feel, particularly as most of them are simply named after the instruments used, with nearly every 'sketch' involving different tools. Cain uses whirling tubes, jaw harp, gongs, whistles, flutes, with the odd instrument out being the Brazilian *berimbau* (musical bow). One of the



Geneva three-piece AMAMI

longest pieces is 'Gaidarski', which is indebted to the *duduk* of Djivan Gasparyan. While episodic in nature, this cumulative sequence has the charm of a movie soundtrack, and indeed, several of the works were composed for theatrical productions. These transient experiences are like snatches of overheard conversations, mostly with a South-East Asian aura shimmering around their perimeter.

MARTIN LONGLEY

TRACK TO TRY *Gaidarski*

Carlos Casas Kamana

Discrepant (56 mins)

★★★★★

Ambient field recordings from the Philippines



Now here's an odd one. Carlos Casas is a Spanish-born filmmaker and artist whose work encompasses film,

sound and visual arts. His previous projects have included a documentary about *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro, and field recordings made in remote regions of Siberia, Tajikistan, Patagonia and Indonesia. *Kamana* takes him to the Zambales region of Luzon island in the Philippines, and the nomadic, hunter-gatherer culture of the indigenous Aeta people there. Having lived with them for weeks, Casas was impressed by the Aeta's endurance and survival skills, subsisting on basic agriculture while hunting wild pigs and bats.

This release is a series of ethnological field recordings and electronic manipulations, 'inspired by and channelling the culture and traditions of the Aeta,' which also

bills itself as, 'a sonic exorcism filled with ancestral frequencies, haunted ghosts, and other animistic spirits from the Pinatubo forests.' Be that as it may, as a listening experience it's an occasionally interesting, but not altogether enthralling, non-melodic ambient soundscape, with snatches of unknown minimalist instruments – some percussive, some perhaps blown or bowed, it's rather hard to say – augmented by infrequent animal noises, disembodied voices and village sounds. An accompanying video would have been helpful to fully understand this conceptual album.

SETH JORDAN

TRACK TO TRY *Pugot Pugot*

Purbayan Chatterjee Unbounded (Abaad)

Sufiscare (41 mins)

★★★★★

Master of Hindustani classical offers cross-cultural creations



Inspired by Hindustani classical lineage and by John McLaughlin's fusions with Shakti

alike, the 45-year old Indian *sitarist* Purbayan Chatterjee has long been a leading figure in Indo-jazz fusion and *Unbounded (Abaad)* is perhaps his most ambitious work to date. With an epic cast of collaborators that includes Shakti *tabla* maestro Zakir Hussain, Béla Fleck and Snarky Puppy's Michael League, Chatterjee sets out to 'create a sound that appeals to the greater diaspora,' in which East and West meet on equal terms.

Over seven expansive tracks, Hindustani classical music collides thrillingly not only with Western jazz

but with elements of blues, Latin, Sufi and Western pop music. Chatterjee himself is a formidable *sitar* player, whether plucking lightning-fast, heavily ornamented single-note runs or more meditative passages, but it's the cross-cultural combinations he creates that make this such a striking record. 'Sukoon (Catharsis)' is a marriage of *ghazal* vocals and floating spiritual jazz vibes. On 'Lalitha (The Joyful Mother)', his sitar combines felicitously with Fleck's banjo to create a meeting between Appalachian and Asian traditions, while 'Nayi Shuruaat (New Beginnings)' is a dreamy confluence of sitar, jazz piano, trumpet, synths and sublime vocals

that would not sound out of place on a Nitin Sawhney album.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

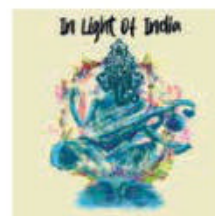
TRACK TO TRY *Sukoon (Catharsis)*

Alec Cooper In Light of India

Alec Cooper (40 mins)

★★★★★

Ambient sitar tunes tackle bluegrass and The Beatles



Edinburgh-based *sitar* player and ethnomusicologist Alec Cooper plays his cards well on his debut album *In Light of India* by exploring nearly all

possibilities that the Indian instrument offers him. Though his compositions are anchored in the traditions of Hindustani classical music, he expands that range into world music by using sonic elements like the Ugandan thumb piano and bluegrass. The album opener 'Morning by the Ganges' is an interesting potpourri of sounds – the sitar meanders lazily on a melodic bed created by the *santoor* (hammered dulcimer), elevated to reality by field recordings from a Varanasi *ghat* (river steps). This solemn mysticism is taken a notch higher on the primeval-sounding 'Charu' with prayer-like incantations. The album also contains

one of the best renditions of The Beatles' 'Across the Universe', where a meditative atmosphere is conjured up. The only oddity is the bluegrass-styled American railroad song 'John Henry'.

The songs follow a loose pattern – they start off slow and end in frenzied improvisational solos, usually accompanied by the *tabla*. But the album has no central theme. Instead, an overarching blanket of ambient electronic music gives it a timeless appearance. In a nutshell, Cooper looks upon the whole world with the light provided by ancient Indian music.

SHASWATA KUNDU CHAUDHURI

TRACK TO TRY *Charu*

Nilza Costa Le Notti di San Patrizio

Bruttura Moderne (33 mins)

★★★★★

Candomblé jazz celebrates Brazil's African ancestry



An Italian-based singer-songwriter born in Salvador, Bahia, Nilza Costa and her powerful, emotionally-

charged voice represent a place at the cultural heart of Brazil's connection to its African ancestry and traditions. Bahia, in the north-east region of Brazil, echoes with sounds far removed from what one might expect from Brazilian music. Candomblé, *capoeira*, samba, *maculelê* and *cantigas de roda* (nursery rhymes) are just a few of the styles drawn upon in Costa's past repertoire and in this third album.

Le Notti di San Patrizio is a brave excursion into Afro jazz, with various tracks bursting into a flurry of saxophone and drum kit halfway through. I was left wishing that these jazzier sections felt slightly more integrated, at times the different energies of Costa's storytelling vocals and her band felt a bit superimposed. 'Odè em Transe', however, demonstrates well the intention of the arrangements. The album excels in its exploration of voice and percussion, a hallmark of Candomblé musical tradition heard clearly in 'Oselu Ko Ni Sè' and 'Eleguà'. Some tracks swim through more harmonic-based arrangements founded on guitar and flute; 'Maresia' is a respite from the energised, highly-danceable tracklist, while 'Choro das Aguas' closes the album with a pensive, rubato oration accompanied by understated keyboard. An enjoyable listen.

CHARLOTTE ALGAR

TRACK TO TRY *Odè em Transe* ▶



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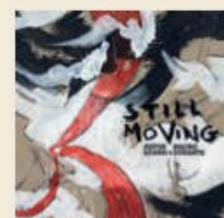
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Justin Adams & Mauro Durante Still Moving

Ponderosa Music Records (44 mins)

★★★★★

Adventurous collaboration brings out genre-bending blues



Adams has long been a bold and adventurous serial collaborator but this album with Mauro Durante – leader of Italy's premier *taranta* and *pizzica* band Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino – ranks among his finest achievements. The opener 'Dark Road Down' starts with a haunting desert blues guitar motif that swiftly turns into a ZZ Top boogie before Durante sings a keening melody on which the *zephyrs* carry the chants of the Maghreb across the sea to the heel of southern Italy. There are traditional Italian work songs ('Amara Terra Mia') and old Carter Family favourites ('Little Moses') as well as original compositions on which the duo create a

heady Mississippi-to-Mediterranean blues trance with influences as diverse as garage rock and avant-garde contemporary classical thrown in for good measure. Adams' prowess as a guitarist is well known but what surprises here is the emotional power of his deep, bluesy voice, which suggests he learned a thing or two about singing during the years backing Robert Plant. Durante's higher tones offer a potent foil, while he conjures thundering rhythms out of a simple frame drum and executes a series of fiddle/electric guitar duets with Adams that are alternately fiery and filigree. One of the albums of the year.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

TRACK TO TRY *Dark Road Down*

Devin Hoff Voices from the Empty Moor (Songs of Anne Briggs)

Kill Rock Stars (40 mins)

★★★★★

Bassist brings in talented friends for tribute to folk icon



Imagine 'She Moved Through the Fair' given voice through bowed solo bass, its opening notes rumbling like the subterranean calls of buried Titans, underlaid below the tune itself as it follows the fluid turns of melody. Well, imagine no more – bassist Devin Hoff has made it real, arranging the parts into arresting new wholes. The bassist has studied the music of Anne Briggs

for over a decade, followed its paths like a tracker of game, transcribing, practicing, arranging and performing from her recorded output and inviting guest artists to bring their own trails into Briggs' music to the fore. Thus Sharon Van Etten delivers a beautiful 'Go Your Way' against layered, angular stabs of bass, while Julia Holter's take on 'Let No Man Steal Your Thyme' builds from rich chamber-gothic to nightmarish instrumental shrieks and drones. Roughly half of the songs feature vocalists, while the others are 'sung' on double bass, *oud*, saxophone, guitar and drums. Which means Alejandro Farha's oud giving voice to 'The Snow it Melts the Soonest / My Bonny Boy', the elemental mournful calls of Howard Wiley's sax dripping across 'Maa Bonny Lad', or Jim White's

guitar on 'Willie O Winsbury'. For a new perspective on Briggs, this is arresting territory to explore.

TIM CUMMING

TRACK TO TRY *Willie O Winsbury*

Islandman Godless Ceremony

Music for Dreams (51 mins)

★★★★★

Anatolian anthems flirting with Balearic beats



Islandman supplies slick multi-layered atmospheric down-tempo electronica with an ethno touch.

Featuring musicians from all over the globe, the title of the album *Godless Ceremony* gives one pause for thought.

A sense of 'ceremony' to be sure – is what is missing in most European and American music, and life in general. It is also in turn what a lot of listeners, concert-goers and clubbers crave, and at least partially accounts for the popularity of such phenomena as the Balkan wave. Here, however, Tolga Büyük aka Islandman, presents music of ceremony shorn of its sacral component. It is a bit like two ships passing in the night: Westerners move eastward, yearning for the sacred, while at the same time Easterners, like Büyük, abandon it.

Here we run up against 'Kara Toprak' again, the celebrated *aşık* Veysel folk composition, which Altın Gün recently covered on their last LP. 'Tarhamanine Assinegh' features Touareg band Tamikrest doing a call-and-response routine pitched against some vintage electronica, and finally three-fourths of the way through, the famous desert blues guitar work kicks in. 'Aku Membawa' is a good one too – a house track stuck in an echo chamber with the title phrase (I Bring) chanted in Indonesian, and the reverb turned all the way up.

ROBERT RIGNEY

TRACK TO TRY *Tarhamanine Assinegh feat Tamikrest*

Tommy Khosla Vignettes

Vadi Records (40 mins)

★★★★★

Forward-thinking debut delivers chillwave sitar sounds



Vignettes is a series of small windows into the life, history and identity of its creator, London-

based *sitar* player and producer Tommy Khosla. It is an exploration on the themes of mixed heritage (Khosla has roots in India, France and the UK) and neurodiversity that is filled with equal parts nostalgia and curiosity. Across a collage of 18 very short tracks, most drifting in at around the one- or two-minute mark, sitar leads the way through lo-fi hip-hop beats, synths that blur between ambient and chillwave, and cameos from instruments such as *shakuhachi* (Japanese flute) and *cello*, all played by Khosla. Melodies also drift by the way of Hindustani classical music and English folk (with echoes of Sheema Mukherjee with The Imagined Village on tracks such as 'Flora'). The use of sitar in these sort of contexts has the risk of coming



Sofia Rei UMBRAL

Cascabelera Records (31 mins)

★★★★★

Latin folk's digital future



Sofia Rei is an Argentinian singer, songwriter and producer whose fearless experimentation takes you to untold musical heights. Her fifth album, *UMBRAL*, is a masterclass in how to combine folkloric tradition with digital futurism. The album has an enchanting authenticity derived from Rei allowing her unique personality to be revealed in music.

UMBRAL (Threshold) was conceived in the mountains of the Elqui Valley, Chile. Rei completed a solo trek across the rugged terrain with two backpacks of recording gear. The resulting sound can broadly be described as Latin folk infused with spacey loops,

samples, synths and digi-wizardry. There's a big jazz vibe, notes of hip-hop and some pleasing womp. Rei's (classically-trained) singing voice is the top line, though. Not only does it soar with sonic beauty, it chirps, clicks, whistles, speaks and resonates wonderfully. Stand out tracks are 'Un Mismo Cielo', which neatly summarises the album's sound; 'Helvética', which has echoes of Ana Tijoux; and opener, 'La Otra', which leaps from glitch to Andes, synth to plucked strings, soprano singing to unusual phrasing. Not a record for folk purists or easy listeners, *UMBRAL* is a raw expression of curious creativity and brave experimentation. Sublime.

DAN HOBSON

TRACK TO TRY *Un Mismo Cielo*

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across very corny, but such pitfalls are avoided with Khosla's obvious skill at the instrument and adventurous composition.

It all feels deeply personal, inspired by Khosla's grandparents' slideshows of their travels in North India, and littered with frequent snippets of family reminiscences and field recordings. *Vignettes* has been three years in the making, and is an accomplished debut for Khosla, with an impressive vision and maturity that belies their 22 years.

JIM HICKSON

TRACK TO TRY *Lost World*

KingL Man Headonix

Ear Conditioning (35 mins)

★★★★★

Sample-laden Ethio-jazz with an important message



If you knew and loved Fun-Da-Mental, the so-called 'Asian Public Enemy', the agit-popping global prog-punk collective that cut a swathe through the UK and the world from the 90s on, then you knew Dave Watts. The group's anti-racist sentiment and political savvy were embodied by its explosive frontman, who has maintained his righteous rage as genre-bending DJ D.WattsRiot and now, as KingL Man, a Canary Islands-based beats-maker and disrupter. It's no wonder, then, that debut album *Headonix* feels like a sucker punch, its ten tracks pulsing with features by artists including Senegalese vocalists Sidi IB and Ibrahima El Latigazo, both of whom did time in a Tenerife migrant holding centre, and Mame Samba, whose vocals on the track 'Guidance & Healing' offer precisely that.

Traditional music including Egyptian horns and Astatke-style Ethio-jazz works with a band on violin, percussion, drums and bass guitar deployed by the late, legendary Nick 'Count Dubulah' Page. Canadian writer/poet Troy Harkin rails against corporate greed on 'Monsanto'; Watts tells it like it is over samples and glitchy electronics on 'Mike Input at Loud Speakers Corner'; singer Zeeteah lifts the rippling, ambient 'Assuage No 9' into the stratosphere. Richly textured, clear in its message and valid in its anger, this is a work with something to say.

JANE CORNWELL

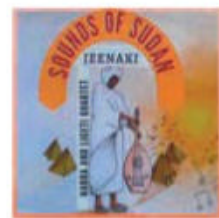
TRACK TO TRY *Guidance & Healing*

Nabra & Ligeti Quartet Sounds of Sudan

Nabra & Ligeti Quartet (38 mins)

★★★★★

Oud duo bring in strings for Sudanese pop covers



Bristol-based *oud* players Ali Elmubarak and Knud Stüwe came together as Nabra in 2015 to explore a shared love of Sudanese music. The duo's debut album sees them teaming up with the Ligeti string quartet to give a new twist to classic Sudanese pop.

Sudanese music is always a treat – inherently African and unmistakably Arabic, full of pentatonic groove and dancing rhythms – and this set of seven folk-leaning pop songs from Sudan's 'golden era' shows it well. The Ligeti Quartet's strings bring a lightness that complements the earthy ouds, and add a distinct classical flavour while maintaining the playful nature of the songs. The string arrangements are clearly – and admittedly – inspired by the Kronos Quartet, and are most effective during the more poetic and lyrical pieces, where their parts can swell and swirl around the melodies of Elmubarak's voice. When the pieces skew towards the dancier side of things, however, the quartet can struggle a little to find space among the rhythm. Strings are great for subtlety and emotion but sometimes what you really need is the nice, heavy boom of the sadly absent *tar* (frame drum). This is a solid and interesting debut.

JIM HICKSON

TRACK TO TRY *Bassama*

Antoni O'Breskey Blessed Sadness

Nomadic Piano Project (44 mins)

★★★★★

Genre-blending compositions born across borders



Antoni O'Breskey has long been a prolific, border-denying, genre-splicing presence in his adopted Ireland.

Italian-born with Argentinian roots, his musical interests stretch from Irish and Arabic traditional music to Spanish flamenco, blues, jazz and far beyond.

Conceived at the beginning of the first lockdown and recorded under COVID-19 restrictions, *Blessed Sadness* may well be the most accomplished and satisfying of his nearly 40 recordings. The dominant tone is mellow and reflective, shot through

with often luminous beauty, as in the title-track where O'Breskey's piano and trumpet are lit up by Davide Secondi's ukulele, and in the sweet innocence of the cello- and double bass-accompanied 'Unfolding Lullaby'. Inspired by Mongolian music, 'Baigali Khan' is a thrilling multi-voiced, string-led celebration of lives more closely connected to nature. More exhilarating still, is the joyful fusion of Appalachian dulcimer, didgeridoo, *bodhrán* and banjo on 'Dancing on the Green', while the fiddle, cello and piano combination of 'Waltz to Forgotten Times' boasts a delightfully rustic vitality. Closer to home, 'Barbara Allen' is gorgeously rendered, O'Breskey's heartfelt vocals held aloft by Aongus Mac Amhlaigh's cossetting cello and Leonora Lyne's comforting flute. Lyne is also heard, with fiddler Ultan O'Brien, on the wonderfully evocative 'Cloudburst', while the ironically titled '2020 Rhapsody' is a thoughtful meditation on living through a pandemic.

MICHAEL QUINN

TRACK TO TRY *Cloudburst*

On Our Own Clock On Our Own Clock

Mushroom Half Hour & Total Refreshment Centre (41 mins)

★★★★★

Making art in a pandemic



What with the London-based 16-piece Balimaya Project and a host of other new collectives finding strength in numbers, a happy side effect of the pandemic has been the re-emergence of big bands. On Our Own Clock is one such enterprise: 14 crack musicians collaborating across cities, bandwidths, oceans and mp3s, digging into a treasure trove of South African jazz, traditional Senegalese instrumental music and the diaspora-rich sounds of London. Malleability was key from the get-go; it's to the credit of players including tuba don Theon Cross, Balimaya Project's Yahael Camara Onono and Jo'burg singer/trombonist Siya Makuzeni that these 11 wonderfully varied pieces of music ooze invention and togetherness.

Beginning, fittingly, with one of three interludes-come-motivations titled 'How to Make Art in a Pandemic', the project explores notions of time and spirituality on tracks including the snaking, Alice Coltrane-esque 'Dune Dance' and the shiny brass-pumped 'Ngikhethile' (loosely, isiZulu for 'I Have Chosen'). Moments of transcendence abound, sticking a metaphorical

two fingers up to both COVID-19 and racism; '(Tell the Gods) We Still Building', with its swaying grooves and stinging social commentary, feels like an old skool classic. There's a fanzine, session footage and a film too.

JANE CORNWELL

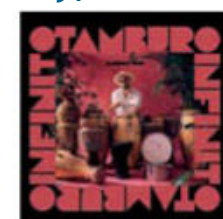
TRACK TO TRY *Ngikhethile*

Gabriele Poso Tamburo Infinito

Wonderwheel Recordings (31 mins)

★★★★★

Joyful drums



An album named *Tamburo Infinito* is fairly self-explanatory in its intentions. The seventh record from Italian multi-instrumentalist Gabriele Poso, it foregrounds the drum in all its variegated glory. Recorded in isolation, its energy is far from muted. Instead, Poso has crafted a jubilant affair, packed with joyous horn lines, and memorable hooks.

Opener 'Ritmo' is powerful, catchy, and brimming with percussive interplay, while 'La Bola' is the standout offering. The funky guitar work combines well with Poso's layered vocals, which are underpinned by an incessant and constantly evolving rhythmic underbelly. Sometimes the experimentations here feel a bit raw. 'Futurista', in particular, is a curious track. Its ludic synths are played in conjunction with a staccato vocal line, that opens out into a pattern reminiscent of the opening from Kate Bush's 'Running Up That Hill'. But the large majority of tracks hit the nail on the head. The title-track is full of swagger and low-end might, giving *baile funk* aficionados a run for their money, while 'Party People' is simply ebullient. Closer 'New Moon Rituals' fittingly allows the drums to come to the fore, a ruminative effort that captures the power of percussion on its own terms.

ALEX DE LACEY

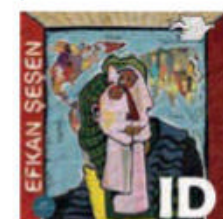
TRACK TO TRY *La Bola*

Efkan Şeşen ID

Sesen Muziek (40 mins)

★★★★★

Turkish polyglot offers songs for a united world



The album cover says it all: a picture of the globe, the various continents composed of heads of human beings ▶



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of varying colours, in the foreground a Picasso-esque woman's face with a white dove: and the word *ID* across it. The message is clear: The world is my passport. This is the gist of Efsan Şeşen's message on his 15th album, consisting of nine songs in nine languages: Turkish, Dutch, English, Kurdish, Armenian, Arabic, Pontian, Zazaki and Lazuri.

The songs are conveyed with a great deal of pathos and melodrama, with accompanying instrumental forays, reflecting the language at hand. Maybe the best is 'Peyva Paşîn', a Kurmanji (one of four Kurdish dialects) mountain song, which begins with barking dogs and tinkling sheep bells, then a kind of Kurdish *kaval* (flute) kicks in, followed by a sudden, soaring vocal flight, strummed *saz*, all summoning up the atmosphere of the craggy, sun-parched peaks of Kurdistan. Typically, the weakest songs are the ones that have nothing to do with the Anatolian world Şeşen knows best. 'Het Nieuwe Leven' (Dutch for The New Life) is a sentimental ditty in which Şeşen considers his five years in a new country. The weakest is predictably the English song, 'We Must Stand as One', which puts across a slightly sappy, vaguely communist 'we are the world' sentiment. At the risk of appearing curmudgeonly, ultimately, the nine songs beg the question: can, as Şeşen seems to suggest, music really build bridges between people? I think the jury is still out on that one.

ROBERT RIGNEY

TRACK TO TRY *Peyva Paşîn*

Joseph Tawadros Hope in an Empty City

Joseph Tawadros (78 mins)

★★★★★

Oud virtuoso returns with an expansive set of compositions



Recorded in New York before the onset of COVID-19, this latest album by Egyptian/Australian *oud*

virtuoso Joseph Tawadros is a rollercoaster of styles and emotions. Composed especially for a new multidisciplinary quintet, the ensemble pieces on *Hope in an Empty City* crackle with organic energy and dynamism. The synergy between the musicians is immediately evident on thrilling opener 'Smoke and Mirrors', with the jazz rhythm section of Scott Colley (double bass) and Dan Weiss (drums) effortlessly navigating

Tawadros' kaleidoscopic grooves and unison passages. Fusion luminary David Fiuczynski's chiming guitar swells and crystalline fretless lines lend a cinematic intensity – often akin to early 70s Mahavishnu Orchestra – especially on the mutant blues riffs of 'Devil's Advocate'. Jordanian violinist Layth Sidiq is the perfect melodic foil for Tawadros, their shared background in Arabic music preserving the quarter-tonal nature of pieces such as the brooding title-track, and the spiralling 'Dance of the Quarter Tones'.

Interspersed among the ensemble pieces are solo oud improvisations, developed under lockdown, which lend the album its more contemplative moments. A particular highlight is the wistful 'Happier Times', a joyful yet bittersweet meditation that sits comfortably between the more frenetic compositions. At 17 tracks totalling 78 minutes, this album is an exhaustive

listen, but one that offers no weak moments, rather an abundance of virtuosity, playfulness and heart.

CHARLIE CAWOOD

TRACK TO TRY *Devil's Advocate*

Brooks Williams & Aaron Catlow Ghost Owl

Red Guitar Blue Music (45 mins)

★★★★★

Owl-inspired record is a hoot!



Cosmo Sheldrake's *Wake Up Calls* samples recordings of endangered birds. And now *Ghost Owl*, which came about after wildlife conservationist and filmmaker/photographer Simon Hurwitz asked Brooks Williams to

compose some music to accompany a series of short films. Williams is a long-serving purveyor of rootsy, full-blooded acoustic guitar. With touring on hold, he teamed up with violinist Aaron Catlow and the duo found themselves with an album's worth of owl-inspired tunes.

These ten instrumentals evoke images of the majestic creature with the heart-shaped face. The marriage of guitar and violin recalls the style of Martin Carthy and Dave Swarbrick and, occasionally, of Django Reinhardt and Stéphane Grappelli. The title-track and 'Rene's Garden' are sinuous and atmospheric, the ethereal violin on 'Tippers' Field' is suitably owlish while 'First Dusk' is an old-time waltz. With the bonus of Hurwitz's wonderful owl photography illustrating the CD, *Ghost Owl* is a delight.

TONY GILLAM

TRACK TO TRY *Ghost Owl*



Omar Sosa & Seckou Keita Suba

bendigedig (48 mins)

★★★★★

Sparkling second outing from acclaimed collaborators



Omar Sosa & Seckou Keita's debut album as a duo, *Transparent Water*, came out in 2017 and was a transporting set encompassing Chinese *sheng* and Japanese *koto* as well as Sosa's Afro-Cuban piano and Keita's lush West African *kora*. For their sophomore set, the duo reunite with Venezuelan percussionist Gustavo Ovalles and dextrous water percussionist and electronics hand Steve Argüelles, along with cellist Jaques Morelenbaum and flautist Dramane Dembélé.

Suba means 'Sunrise' in Mandinka, and the set was written and recorded during the global lockdown – the sun rising on a different kind of world for us all – and

the music stands as a paeon, says Keita, to 'peace, hope and unity... when everything's falling apart little by little, the one thing we have inside ourselves is a divine connection with our inner voice.' This is music to foster that connection, from the restrained opener 'Kharit' (Friend) through the circling, pulsing 'Allah Léno', Keita's rich voice gliding over Sosa's perfect touch on the piano, never overplayed. Cello comes to the fore on 'Korason', while Dembélé's flute graces 'Voices on the Sea', a sad, swaying anthem to the victims of forced movement across the world's oceans, and the deeply mournful lament of 'Rei's Ray', an album highlight.

TIM CUMMING

TRACK TO TRY *Rei's Ray*

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In this feature, the editors of our sister music magazines, *Gramophone* and *Jazzwise*, recommend some of their favourite new recordings

Classical

Brought to you by **GRAMOPHONE**

Max Richter/Baltic Sea Philharmonic Orchestra/Kristjan Järvi *Exiles*

Deutsche Grammophon

Assured recontextualisation of hypnotic earlier work



Max Richter's recordings are often based on a central concept or idea – Vivaldi in *The Four Seasons*

Recomposed, sonically induced relaxation and altered consciousness in *Sleep*, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in *Voices* or a particular plot and storyline in the composer's many film soundtracks. On *Exiles*, Richter approaches the idea from a different angle, dusting off and repolishing a series of largely independent pre-existing works then grouping them under the theme of 'music as-journey'.

Running through the album's central spine is the title-track itself.

Originally composed in 2014 for a Netherlands Dance Theatre production and written partly in response to the Syrian refugee crisis, the statement of a short Arvo Pärt-like theme is followed by 17 variations that gradually accumulate in intensity. The effect is not unlike Gavin Bryars' 'Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet'. With every iteration of its gently looping theme, the meditative ambience of *Exiles* acquires a more powerful presence, culminating in an unexpectedly dramatic gear-change from minor to major harmonies at around the music's three-quarter mark.

Richter's careful control of the music's architectonic space across its 30-minute-plus running time is impressively handled and controlled, but much credit must also go to Kristjan Järvi and the Baltic Sea Philharmonic, who judge the ebb and flow of the music with astute poise and precision.

PWYLL AP SIŌN

Xiaogang Ye *Winter*

BIS

Sublime career-spanning set



The second album from BIS devoted to Chinese composer Xiaogang Ye (b1955) includes two early works

as well as three composed in the 21st century. From 1983, 'The Brilliance of Western Liang', named after a fifth-century kingdom in north-west China, draws inspiration from ancient Tang Dynasty scores and is wonderfully performed by soloist Wei Lu.

'Winter', the first of three pieces by Ye with the same title, dates from 1988. Atmospherically scored with memorable writing for bassoon, horn and marimba, it conveys a serious and often turbulent mood. Sparser in texture but similar in character, 'December Chrysanthemum' was composed in 2006 in memory of the composer's daughter, who died aged

only 18 months. Winding its way throughout the work is a rhapsodic flute solo, played here by Sharon Bezaly. Composed in 2012, 'The Song of Sorrow and Gratification' – a four-part song cycle set to texts by Buddhist monk Li Shutong – benefits from a highly sympathetic performance by the work's dedicatee, bass-baritone Shenyang, sung in Mandarin.

The concluding 'Starry Sky' was written for the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics. With sweepingly romantic main themes, percussion-capped orchestral climaxes and an ethereal close for children's and women's voices, it's hardly profound but its sense of occasion is difficult to resist. Noriko Ogawa delivers a suitably extrovert performance of the piano solo originally played by Lang Lang. Whether led by José Serebrier or Gilbert Varga, the orchestral playing throughout is splendidly committed and the recording is superb. An outstanding release.

CHRISTIAN HOSKINS

Jazz

Brought to you by **jazzwise**

Omer Klein *Personal Belongings*

Warner Music

★★★★★

Intimate ivory-led suite



The aptly-titled *Personal Belongings* originated close to the heart of gifted Frankfurt-resident Israeli pianist Omer

Klein. Alongside a half-dozen solo pieces reflecting the isolations and precious memories of the past disruptive year, this ten-track repertoire includes contributions from long-time bass partner Haggai Cohen Milo and drummer Amir Bresler. Klein has a beautiful touch, reminiscent of the light-stepping springiness of Chick Corea, while his inventiveness in the nuanced repetition of looping phrases suggests perceptive attention to Brad

Mehldau. The pretty elisions, subtle dynamics and steadily flowing motion of unaccompanied opener, 'Kavana', segue without a break into the surging trio dance of 'Baghdad Blues', with Klein repeatedly opening improv choruses in fresh figures, unfolded with crystal clarity. 'The Flower and the Seed' celebrates his children in the jiggling playfulness of its later stages and 'Good Hands' is very Corea-like. 'Najara' (named after a 16th-century Jewish poet) is a haunting melody developing in such understated nuances as to sound as if it's still and moving at the same time, 'Shake It' is a rocking chordal groove over a drums shuffle, and 'Quarantined with You' is a slow piece of stride-piano of wistful impishness. At times, this is as private a session as the title suggests, but the invitation to listen in is always there.

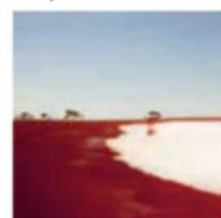
JOHN FORDHAM

Peter Knight and The Australian Art Orchestra *Crossed and Recrossed*

Hospital Hill Records

★★★★★

Expansive treatise on time



Settle back and let the Australian Art Orchestra take you on a journey across an interior, through endless overlapping vistas into the red heart of... what? Australia? A remote region that only exists in the minds of its inhabitants? Author Gerald Murnane posed such quandaries in his iconic novel *The Plains*, from which 'Crossed', the first half of this wonderfully strange, hugely atmospheric album takes its cue. Knight weaves golden trumpet lines through a soundscape all the more metaphysical for intoned

verse, keyboard improvisations and the drumming of Simon Barker (whose real life penchant for barefoot marathon running is palpable). Electronics glitch and shimmer; a didgeridoo blast feels ancient, portentous. Space is taken then relinquished. On 'Recrossed', a reading of Italo Calvino's *Diomira*, an excerpt from *Invisible Cities*, the talented ensemble navigate a labyrinthine world of textures and ideas, subverting chamber jazz clichés with turntables and tape machines, conjuring place with strings and brass, sending compasses spinning with mashed-up field recordings. It's a treatise on time, a mapping of remembrances past, present and future. Or it's a sort of Great Unravelling, disorienting but cathartic. Either way, it's some trip.

JANE CORNWELL

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Fabrizio Rongione in the quietly chilling thriller, *Azor*

NEW RELEASES

Azor

(Dir: Andreas Fontana; Switzerland/France/Argentina; 100 mins; MUBI; UK release: in cinemas October 29)

★★★★★

Engrossing drama of high finance and low morals

Argentina, 1980. Swiss banker Ivan (Fabrizio Rongione) and his wife and advisor Inés (Stéphanie Cléau) are making a hastily arranged visit to Buenos Aires due to the sudden disappearance of Ivan's partner, Mr Keys. Touring the area to reassure their clients that Keys' absence will not affect their business, Ivan learns that Keys had embraced the South American lifestyle a little too enthusiastically. Ivan is unsettled by the increasing realisation that Keys' success in the country was the result of deals with those institutions benefitting from turning a blind eye to the behaviour of the ruling military dictatorship, the church and the security services.

Azor is an absorbing, atmospheric picture that, as befitting its title (loosely translated as 'Keep Quiet') unpacks its plot in a subtle, elliptical manner – a lot is revealed in what isn't spoken but rather in the looks exchanged between characters. Ivan has steel beneath his deferential manner, and moments when Rongione's expression changes as he weighs up the implied threats from various unsavoury partners is screen acting of the highest order. Ivan becomes aware that the times

are changing, and business that was hitherto conducted in mahogany-panelled opulence is now taking place in more unorthodox circumstances. The result is a variation on *Heart of Darkness* (there is a somewhat literal late-night river journey, a surprisingly on-the-nose note in a film that otherwise embraces ambiguity) with a dash of *The Third Man* – Ivan is the innocent (or close enough) abroad, both searching for and haunted by Keys, *Azor*'s own Harry Lime.

Azor is a companion piece of sorts to 2018's *Rojo* (see October 2019 issue, #151), another disquieting Argentinian film that equated unethical personal gain, no matter how apparently victimless the initial infringement, as being synonymous with collusion with a toxic government against the wider population. It's to the benefit of us all that local filmmakers continue to explore this dark period.

The French Dispatch

(Dir: Wes Anderson; US; 107 mins; Searchlight Pictures; UK release: in cinemas October 22)

★★★★★

The master of drolly symmetrical visuals returns

After 2014's *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, Wes Anderson's grand tour of fictional European destinations continues with *The French Dispatch*, set in the Paris suburb of Ennui-sur-Blasé, home to the offices of the titular magazine, a *New Yorker*-style supplement for a regional US newspaper. The long-

serving editor, Arthur Howitzer Jr (Bill Murray, of course) has died as the film opens, and, as per his contract, the magazine must cease publication as a result. The staff convene at the warren of offices to write his obituary and retell some of their stories that Howitzer published over the years – 'The Concrete Masterpiece', art critic JKL Berensen's (Tilda Swinton) account of incarcerated portraitist Moses Rosenthaler (Benicio del Toro) and his jailer muse Simone (Léa Seydoux); 'Revisions to a Manifesto', reportage from the front line of the Ennui-sur-Blasé student uprising by Lucinda Krementz (Frances McDormand), who formed an unlikely bond with the leader Zeffirelli (Timothée Chalamet); and 'The Private Dining Room of the Police Commissioner', the night reporter-at-large Roebuck Wright (Jeffrey Wright) had a gastronomic adventure interrupted by a kidnapping.

Perhaps the most Wes Anderson-y Wes Anderson film yet, *The French Dispatch* isn't going to convert any hold outs to his particular style, which is here further embellished by the Francophile director's homage to the cinema of his adopted home. His feats of narrative organisation reach new, virtuosic heights, as each episode in the portmanteau is narrated retrospectively by the characters, even as they feature as players in their own stories – and collectively within a larger organising conceit of articles

within the magazine. By its nature episodic, this is somewhat reinforced by the absence of a single dominant character, à la M Gustave of *The Grand Budapest Hotel* or *The Royal Tenenbaums*' patriarch, who anchored the wacky capers unfolding around them. This film's glittering cast all do good work (if often underused), but it misses a firm on-screen personality to hold it together, as the individual episodes aren't equally strong – the pastiche of French 'new wave' stylings in 'Revisions to a Manifesto' veer dangerously close to *French and Saunders* skit territory. But it has charm to spare, and the attention to detail in the world building of the *mise-en-scène*, including a *Tintin*-esque animated sequence, is staggering. It now goes without saying that photography, costume and production design are all flawless, and there is tremendous cinephilic pleasure to be had. Any reasonable expectations are surely met, but I do wonder if the hermetic nature of Anderson World has begun to have a suffocating effect. While no-one's expecting his next movie to be a gritty exercise in social realism, on this evidence, it might do him good to loosen up just a bit.

My Little Sister

(Dir: Stéphanie Chuat & Véronique Reymond; Switzerland; 99 mins; 606 Distribution; UK release: in cinemas October 8)

★★★★★

Rewarding family drama that lingers long after it's finished

Actor Sven (Lars Eidinger) has an aggressive form of leukemia and as *My Little Sister* opens he has received a bone marrow transplant from his twin sister Lisa (Nina Hoss) in a Berlin hospital. Lisa, a writer currently employed as a teacher in the expensive Swiss school her husband Martin (Jens Albinus) runs, is devoted to Sven and immediately takes him to live with her family to recuperate when it becomes apparent that the arrangement for him to stay with their mother (Marthe Keller) isn't going to work. Sven is banking on his treatment being a success so he can get back to work on the production of *Hamlet* he's been collaborating on, and Lisa supports him in the face of scepticism by the play's director David (Thomas Ostermeier), who also happens to be Lisa's ex. But as time passes, uncertainty over Sven's prospects, on top of Martin's career ambitions and the day-to-day stresses of being a working mother and now carer, begin to weigh Lisa down. She's looking after

the family, but who's looking after her?

There are several good reasons to see *My Little Sister*, perhaps chief among them the performance of Nina Hoss, the star of recent German-language hits like *Barbara* (2012) and *Phoenix* (2014). Her face gradually tightens as the pressure on her increases and she tries to keep control of multiple spinning plates as the love for her brother threatens to sour all other relationships. What's especially noteworthy about this decent, tender drama is that it does everything it needs to do in a compact 99 minutes, an unfashionably concise running time in an age when comparable streamed 'content' feels needlessly drawn out. I could well imagine an English-language Netflix remake in which Lisa, Sven and Martin suffer at greater length over several episodes but with no greater insight or empathy than is on display here. Sometimes less really is more, something which this film's co-directors seem to understand.

NEW ON DVD/BLU-RAY

The Howling

(Dir: Joe Dante; US; 91 mins; StudioCanal; UK release: Blu-ray & DVD, October 25)

★★★★★

Cheeky werewolf horror-satire gets restoration

It's October, and the horror reissues, a staple throughout the year, go into overdrive for Halloween. A pick of this year's bunch is a pin-sharp 4K restoration of this 1981 loose adaptation of the Gary Brandner novel of the same name. In it, LA investigative journalist Karen White (Dee Wallace, the year before starring in *ET*) has a close encounter of a hairy kind, which she immediately represses and is packed off to a rural retreat to recuperate with her husband Bill (Christopher Stone). On arrival she finds a pretty eccentric bunch

receiving unusual therapy at the hands of avuncular Dr Waggner (Patrick Macnee) and begins to wonder why there seem to be so many wolves in the area at night... Part knowing homage to werewolf mythology, part satire on the psychiatry, wellness and media industries, *The Howling* has dated pretty well, although my own preference remains for the less campy, contemporaneous *An American Werewolf in London*. Like that film, *The Howling* features a set-piece transformation that helped legitimise special effects make-up as a craft. This reissue comes with a featurette about director Joe Dante's extensive career and a documentary that includes interviews and commentaries with cast and crew. This high-end restoration treatment is nice, but it feels slightly counter-intuitive, as it's really a film best watched from a fuzzy VHS tape.

One of Our Aircraft is Missing

(Dir: Michael Powell; UK; 103 mins; BFI; UK release: Blu-ray, available now)

★★★★★

First Blu-ray release for British wartime classic

An early Michael Powell-Emeric Pressburger collaboration, and the first to be released under their shared

credit of The Archers, *One of Our Aircraft is Missing* is a classy piece of wartime propaganda, released in 1942, aimed at impressing on the British public the possibility of resistance to Nazi invasion. The crew of 'B for Bertie' bail out of their damaged Wellington bomber over Holland and are assisted in their escape from occupied territory by the resilient locals. Both the crew and their Dutch comrades are played by a cast that was then largely new to cinema audiences, but would become well-known thereafter, including Googie Withers and a svelte Peter Ustinov as the local priest. In keeping with its public service credentials, the film is shot in an unflashy, near documentary style (there's no score) which makes it somewhat dramatically inert, in significant contrast to its makers' other wartime triumphs *49th Parallel* (1941) and the glorious *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943). Archers scholar Ian Christie contributes an excellent essay as part of the booklet notes and a thoughtful commentary to the film itself, providing valuable social and historical context alongside insights into the film's production.

WORLD CINEMA IS WRITTEN & COMPILED BY JOHN ATKINSON



Bill Murray (left), in Wes Anderson's love letter to journalism, *The French Dispatch*

FESTIVAL FOCUS

UK film festivals

Raindance

October 27-November 6

Raindance, Britain's biggest independent film festival, is returning later in October, kicking off with a film that it was surprising not to find in the LFF programme – the UK premiere of *Best Sellers*, starring Aubrey Plaza and Michael Caine, about a retired author who reluctantly embarks on a book tour to help out a young publisher. This feels like a real coup for a festival that has been punching above its weight for a few years.

raindance.org/festival

London Korean Film Festival

November 4-19

In November, London hosts the London Korean Film Festival at cinemas across the capital. Following *Parasite*'s worldwide success, interest in Korean cinema is at something of a high and this 16th edition of the festival is likely to be very popular, with a strand of programming dedicated to Yuh-jung Youn, who picked up Best Supporting Actress Awards at both the Oscar and the BAFTAs this year for *Minari*.

koreanfilm.co.uk

SPOTLIGHT

BFI London Film Festival,

London, October 6-17

Wouldn't you know it, real life, in-person festivals appear to be back – for the moment, at least. The 65th BFI London Film Festival has announced a programme of 159 features plus shorts, with many more of them showing in actual cinemas than in 2020, including nationwide via partner cinemas such as HOME in Manchester, Watershed in Bristol and Cardiff's Chapter Arts Centre. The result of this is that fewer are now going to be available to view via the BFI Player, which smacks a bit of trying to get the genie back into the bottle, but this may be at the request of distributors rather than a preference of organisers. The festival kicks off with an unexpected choice, the world premiere of Netflix-

funded *The Harder They Fall*, a Western directed by Jeymes Samuel, who is also a singer-songwriter and producer who goes by the stage name The Bullitts. More conventionally, perhaps, the closing film is *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, starring Denzel Washington and Frances McDormand, the first film Joel Coen has directed without brother Ethan alongside him. Many will be excited for *The Power of the Dog*, the first feature film from Jane Campion in over a decade and another Netflix production. And it'll be the first chance to see Kenneth Branagh's autobiographical *Belfast*, a film that has come from nowhere to attract a lot of awards season traction. *Azor* and *The French Dispatch*, reviewed above, are also part of the programme before going on release.

whatson.bfi.org.uk/lff



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28th October - Platform, Glasgow
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2nd November - Settle Victoria Hall, Settle
3rd November - Firth Hall, University of Sheffield Concerts
4th November - Lakeside Arts, Nottingham
5th November - The North Wall, Oxford
6th November - Mount Pleasant Eco Park, Porthtowan
10th November - St George's, Bristol
11th November - The Sanctuary (Music Halls Project), London

2021 FELLOWS

Azin Zahedi (Iran/Germany) - santour, flute
Ahmet Ozan Baysal (Turkey/UK) - bağlama
Brigitte Hart (Australia/UK) - soundscapes, voice
Iona Fyfe (Scotland, UK) - voice, piano
Liz Hanks (UK) - cello
Robert Bisha (Albania/Italy): çifteli, piano, voice, other
Simon Leleux (Belgium) - darbuka, percussion
Thamires Tannous (Brazil/Austria): voice, guitar

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FolkEast Festival

Glemham Hall, Suffolk,
August 19-21

If ever a festival was urgently needed, it was the friendly and easy-going FolkEast 2021. The Cambridge Folk Festival, WOMAD and Cropredy all had to be cancelled, but out in the Suffolk countryside, in a spacious field next to Glemham Hall, an impressive line-up of mostly British artists were determined to lift spirits.

An emotional Simon Emmerson summed up the mood at the end of his band's rousing set on Saturday night: "Afro Celts were put on this earth to lift peoples' spirits. And a year ago I thought our careers were over..." They hadn't played in 19 months, and hadn't had time to rehearse, with some members flying in only right before the show. But they looked and sounded great, opening with a solo from singer, rapper and piper Griogair Labhruidh before the band launched into a furious and non-stop fusion set, involving different combinations of *dhhol* drums, African chanting, *kora*, fiddle, pipes, whistle and electronica. When they reached 'Dark Moon, High Tide' the moon appeared through the clouds. It was one of those nights.

Elsewhere, there were strong performances from The Young'uns and the atmospheric Three Cane Whale, and it was an impressive weekend for Peter Knight. His Gigspanner Big Band included squeezebox hero John Spiers and that fine vocal and multi-instrumentalist duo Phillip Henry & Hannah Martin, and the set saw everything from five-part harmony to duelling violins, stomping bluegrass and dance tunes. Knight loves to improvise, and there was inspired violin-squeezebox improvisation in a later set from Knight and Spiers. What a great weekend.

ROBIN DENSELOW

ACC World Music Festival

Streamed from South Korea,
August 20-22

While superstar Mariza appeared streaming live from Portugal, the remaining all-Korean roster gathered in front of a limited audience in Gwangju City at the Asia Culture Centre (ACC). Despite a confusing number of pop and rock acts on the bill for a Korean 'world music' festival, there was a nice cross section of local musicians in various genres.

The highlight was *gayageum* trio Hey String who collaborated via video with indigenous Taiwanese vocalist Tai Siao-Chu, performing from a studio

Ethno Port Poznań, Poland, September 3-5

Read our review of
the festival online at
bit.ly/ethnoportreview



Wernyhora at
Ethno Port

Maciej Kaczynski

in Taiwan. The *gayageum* (12-stringed zither), accompanied by various other percussion and even electronic effects, combined with Tai's dynamic, seemingly improvised vocals, which were intense even through the TV screen. The musicians' charming interactions in English, promising to play in person together soon, were a poignant reminder of life in the pandemic era, but it was also inspiring to see that musicians are adapting to live performances with remote international hook-ups. This intra-Asia meeting was an unexpected treat.

Another highlight was the pairing of percussionist Han Solip with the group Southern Gyeonggi Jazz. Han's *ulla* (hanging gongs), interacting and playing off the band, was the kind of traditional-meets-jazz setup that is always a thrill. This genre can sometimes fall back onto crowd-pleasing displays of virtuosity, but the musicians here were really listening to each other and getting deep into the rhythms. The ACC is doing good work to promote Korean musicians around the world; hopefully next summer I can attend in person.

JAMES CATCHPOLE

John Francis Flynn The Lexington, Islington, London, August 31

A quiet London launch for John Francis Flynn's superb album *I Would Not Live Always* found the tall, hirsute young Irishman seated solo on stage with just an acoustic guitar and tin whistles to accompany him. Where his debut album features keyboards, a *sean nós* vocalist and subtle loops and effects, here Flynn was back to basics and his opening number, an intense and powerful reading of

Ewan MacColl's prison ballad 'The Lag's Song', silenced the room. "That tune," Flynn announced, "is not on the album." That he can open his debut London performance without pushing anything the audience might have heard showed both his confidence and range. Flynn's self-assuredness was apparent when he discarded his guitar to pick up a double tin whistle to play an old dance tune – his impossibly deep voice and powerful presence held the audience in thrall. Flynn's also a member of Skipper's Alley, a Dublin five-piece folk band but he didn't appear to miss his band mates, bashing as he did on his guitar to utilise its percussive possibilities. He introduced 'Lovely Joan' as a song he learned off a Shirley Collins album. In a brief yet perfectly shaped set the most resonant tune might have been 'Shallow Brown', a song Flynn said he learned from a book of sea shanties and one where he sings in the voice of a slave fearful of being sold by his master. For such an intense musician, Flynn was laconic between songs, crediting tunes to the late Ronnie Drew of The Dubliners and laughing at his own shortcomings. Irish folk music continues to go from strength to strength and John Francis Flynn is a post-pandemic talent to reckon with.

GARTH CARTWRIGHT

Aïcha Redouane Lausitz Festival, Stadttheater Kamenz, Germany, September 8

This performance by Moroccan-born Aïcha Redouane, one of the best singers of classical Arabic *maqam*, was part of the impressive Lausitz Festival lasting nearly a month in different locations in eastern Germany. She's a

regular performer at the Fes Festival in Morocco and I've also seen her at the Mugham Festival in Baku, Azerbaijan. But this was her first concert for 18 months after the lockdown at home in Saint-Denis, France.

Her repertoire is of Sufi songs by Arabic poets Ibn al-Farid, Ibn Arabi and others. One of the Ibn Arabi songs mentions a monastery, the *Torah* and the *Qur'an* and says 'I follow the religion of love.' Dressed in a white robe, she frequently touched her heart to bring out the message of love and sang with a grainy intensity. Sometimes it seemed as if she was sobbing, sometimes laughing. I asked her about these moments afterwards, but it wasn't conscious, these emotions just come directly out of the text, she explained.

She was accompanied by her husband Habib Yammine on percussion and Sofiane Negra on *oud*. 'The mere sight of the seal on the wine jars is enough to make its revellers utterly drunk. To sprinkle it on the earth of a dead man's tomb would suffice to revive his body and return his soul,' she sang. Somehow Negra's lute was as warm and robust as a red wine. Yammine gave a spectacular solo on the *riqq* (tambourine). With a complex counterpoint of tapping fingers and whispering jingles, this simple instrument can be quite miraculous in the right hands. Redouane even got us singing phrases in various *maqamat* in a brave act of audience participation and seemed genuinely surprised how well we did. This wasn't an audience familiar with Arabic song, yet in this small German town, she drew them in, which is clearly the purpose of a festival like this.

SIMON BROUGHTON

Michael Spitzer

Simon Broughton talks to the musicologist and academic about his ambitious new book, *The Musical Human*, and the sounds that fascinate him

“**Y**ou could spend several lifetimes writing a global history of music,” chuckles Michael Spitzer. He should know, he’s just written one that covers four million years: *The Musical Human*. It is equally impressive because of its wide-reaching references and the ideas it expounds. And it’s not just about human music, but our music compared to that of birds and whales. “Music is such a rich holistic thing that engages every bit of your brain and body and soul and heart, that you need to chuck lots of tools at it from lots of disciplines. It doesn’t matter where you start – Beethoven, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan or Duke Ellington – if you follow your nose intellectually you will end up in the same place eventually, which is everywhere.”

Michael Spitzer studied at Oxford and Southampton Universities, taught at Durham University and is now professor of music at the University of Liverpool. He’s a leading Beethoven specialist, though he’s also published *A History of Emotion in Western Music: A Thousand Years from Chant to Pop*, so this isn’t the first time he’s dedicated himself to such an expansive historical scale. But where does this scope of curiosity come from?

“I’ve got a strange, exotic family history. Hungarian parents, my mother was in Auschwitz. I was born in Nigeria and raised in Israel before coming to England and growing up in Kent. Although I look like a posh English person and I went to Oxford, I hated it because it was full of Etonians and I was a working-class bloke – my father bought and sold junk furniture, like in *Steptoe and Son*! It sealed my view as an outsider and as an academic. I’ve always distanced myself from what’s fashionable and mainstream.”

“While I became ‘a Beethoven guy,’ I never felt I was European or classical and I became interested in the meaning of music generally. I wanted to get to the nitty gritty of what music is and how it worked psychologically.” Spitzer learned *shakuhachi* from Yoshikazu Iwamoto (featured on the covermount CD) and has “an affinity for *gagaku* and Indian music – both Hindustani and Karnatic. I love the intensification of music – in *qawwali* and in *raga*. I get that process of preluding and finding yourself and then intensifying to a climax which is orgasmic.”

One of the most interesting sections of *The Musical Human* relates to what Spitzer calls the “four musical superpowers.” In the book, he explains, “I tried to crack the code or DNA of each civilisation. So, in the West it was these killer apps of notes, notation and polyphony.” Notation and polyphony are clear, but by ‘notes’ he means “conceptualising a note differently to how you speak it, so you get a pure pitch and a fixity of pitch.” But these are just the West’s ‘killer apps.’ “*The West had polyphony (with notes and notation)*,” he writes in the book. “*Islam had ornament. India pursued taste. And China’s power was colour or timbre.*”

I was surprised that Africa didn’t feature as a superpower of rhythm in his global purview. He explains that every region was given the same amount of space – six pages each – “but with Africa there simply was no history because there was no literature. It was an oral civilisation.”

One of the superpowers of Western music, as defined by Spitzer, is notation and this is illustrated with another track on this issue’s covermount CD. The song ‘Skolion of Seikilos’ is the world’s oldest surviving complete piece of music, performed here by Michael Levy

on the lyre. The Seikilos epitaph is a cylindrical tombstone discovered in the Hellenistic town of Tralles (in western Turkey); it now resides in the National Museum of Denmark in Copenhagen. “What’s special about the Seikilos song, which heralds from about 200AD, is that it’s a complete piece of music and scholars concur how to transcribe it. What’s also important is that you expect music from 2,000 years ago to be very different. But it’s not. It’s very familiar. It’s the shock of the familiarity, which is wonderful. It’s a diatonic tune in four bar phrases with a sense of harmony. It’s a folksong and you realise that things haven’t changed that much in all that time.”

What did change was the church’s involvement in banning folk songs. Our so-called tradition of Western music starts off with notated music, which is church music and a lot of chant. So folk music, like African music, has disappeared from history because it wasn’t written down. “What ‘Seikilos’ shows,” Spitzer explains, “is that behind the curtain of official music there’s everyday-life music played in fields,

taverns, weddings and funerals, which is very familiar to us. The lyrics are saying ‘seize the day, life is short, make the most of it.’ It’s a life-affirming happy song.”

The Musical Human is actually quite damning of Western music. Early on Spitzer writes: ‘*By adulthood, Western people’s experience of music is usually entirely passive... Why have we become so dependent*

on ubiquitous music, while being at the same time almost totally disengaged from actually making it?’

“Western musicology is having a nervous breakdown right now,” he says. “It’s a bit like the British Empire, realising we’re just a footnote to the other great civilisations. And in historical terms we’re tiny, tiny footnotes to four million years of music. There is still a terror and allergy to taking a global view because that smacks of imperialism, so I’ve had a few attacks on me. How can I, as a Western male, tell a global story? But you can’t not be part of a tiny corner of the planet and being Western doesn’t disqualify you from being a historian.”

The Musical Human also compares the music of humans to that of other animals like birds, bats and whales. “My agenda,” Spitzer says, “is looking at *Homo sapiens* as part of the planet’s life altogether alongside the animal kingdom. How will we ever know what a bat is thinking? But we can because we can analyse a pipistrel bat’s song, which happens in a microsecond, but has syntax. It is a song and it’s a window into the bat’s soul. Equally, there is the flow of a humpback whale’s song. It flows because the medium is water, whereas our medium is bipedalism and walking underlies our music.”

“I hope in the future other books might follow this path of humility of seeing the total picture of human music as a part of the music of nature and the music of the world.” ♦

+ **BOOK** *The Musical Human: A History of Life on Earth* is published by Bloomsbury and was reviewed last issue

+ **LISTEN** Hear a track from Michael Levy (track 14) and Yoshikazu Iwamoto (track 15) on this issue’s covermount CD

+ **MORE** Read more about Michael Levy and his lyre on p89



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Kagawa, Japan



James Catchpole reports from the udon noodle capital where the musical sanukite stones, famous for their chiming tone, can be found

Located on the north-eastern portion of Shikoku Island and boasting a population just under a million, Kagawa is the smallest prefecture by area in Japan. Though mainly known as the nation's udon capital, it's also a region of stunning views of the Inland Sea, rolling green hills, the almost 400-year-old Ritsurin Garden, and the lively but walkable city of Takamatsu. Although somewhat an afterthought among many domestic tourists in Japan, I decided it would be a good area to explore while escaping the '2020' Covid-lympics being held in Tokyo in late July.

Kagawa has been less effected by the pandemic than other parts of Japan, but still many events including all the famous summer festivals were postponed. Upon arriving I hit up a local friend, jazz drummer Masashi Tomikawa, who had recently returned to Kagawa after almost 40 years away, asking him to take me around. Thirty kilometres outside Takamatsu, in the small village of Kamogawa, he takes me to one of the few spots in Japan where the unique, musical sanukite stones can be found.

These are rare stones, much harder and finer grained than normal volcanic rocks, once used for arrows and tools as far back as the Yayoi era in Japan. They are famous for their chiming tone when struck and have at times been used as percussion backing for local musicians. Some *Songlines* readers may remember Japanese musician Stomu Yamashta, known for playing with Steve Winwood among others, as one of the few people to play the stones in a professional setting.

Tomikawa and I arrive at the foot of Mount Kiyama, where Miyazaki-san, the president of a small construction company, has his home and music studio. Before the slopes of the mountain were made off-limits a few years ago as part of a national park, people were free to hike and look for sanukite stone fragments. In fact, Tomikawa's 92-year-old mother had

told him that, as a young girl, she was sent up the mountain to collect bits of sanukite to contribute to the war effort. Collecting and moving a larger slab, however, is impossible without the proper equipment, as the density of the stones makes them very heavy. Even the smaller hanging stones used as percussion can weigh more than 20kg.

Having plenty of construction equipment, Miyazaki is able to get up the slopes and excavate several larger stones that he then takes to a master stonecutter for smoothing and cutting. He now has more than 20 thin slabs of various shapes and sizes, which

he hangs in his home studio. In pre-Covid days he would even take them by car to various gigs where Tomikawa would play them, Miyazaki accompanying on *shakuhachi*.

"The stones are not like regular instruments. They are like an extension of nature," says Miyazaki. "The tone they make is the sound of the earth." A self-taught shakuhachi player (after years of playing blues guitar), Miyazaki wanted to find a new sound and ten years ago asked Tomikawa to introduce him to some Western musicians. Through his Tokyo connections, he brought Americans Jeff Curry on acoustic bass and Neil Stalner on trumpet down to Kagawa, where the four would sit and drink by the river and then return to the studio to play through the night, improvising. They called their unit Yume Goto (loosely translated as 'Of Dreams'). I had caught several of their gigs and was immediately struck by the otherworldly sound environment the stones created in a band setting. "This wasn't Japanese music or jazz, and we didn't really plan much out verbally either," Tomikawa explains. "Miyazaki can't speak English and the others' Japanese was pretty basic. But instead of going back and forth translating for them, we just started to play, and the sound came together naturally."

Trumpeter Stalner sadly passed away a couple years ago, and the Yume Goto project disbanded. However, Miyazaki's energy at 70 years old is limitless, and he's eager to work on some projects to get the stones shown around the world. "Let's bring them to New York! We can share the natural energy of the sanukite with audiences there. Don't you think they'd like them?" I assure him that they would. Sitting with cups of *sake* in Miyazaki's home studio at the base of Mount Kiyama in rural Kagawa, I find myself at a loss for words, thinking of these 15 million-year-old stones, and how their ringing sound transports the listener into the realm of pure nature. ♦



Views over Kagawa, on the island of Shikoku

Drummer Masashi Tomikawa plays sanukite stones



BEGINNER'S GUIDE



Marilena Delli

Ian Brennan

The American music producer has cultivated a reputation for uncovering the beguiling and the bizarre on his quest for the remarkable and less remarked upon. **Nigel Williamson** explores his curious catalogue

While it is not only rare but, to date, unique for a producer rather than an artist to appear in this magazine's Beginner's Guide, there is no better person to break that mould. Ian Brennan is a rare and unique kind of world music producer.

Over the last decade, he has produced no fewer than 34 albums on his travels around the globe, from Rwanda and Malawi to Cambodia and Vietnam via Yemen and Pakistan. He bristles at calling his singular productions 'world music' albums and told this magazine in 2018 that he prefers to see them as "candid and raw punk records that sometimes happen to come from remote parts of the globe."

Almost all of his productions have featured little-known and largely unheard musicians – indeed, some of those he has recorded had never previously written a song or made music before. On projects ranging from abandoned albino children in Tanzania to maximum security prisoners in Malawi, Brennan has

attempted to give voice to the dispossessed, traumatised and persecuted, based upon a DIY ethos that holds that everyone deserves to be heard, regardless of whether they have any musical training or experience.

Valuing authenticity over airbrushed, AutoTuned perfectionism and recording live without overdubs, Brennan has operated outside the music industry's accepted categories and expectations – an approach that has brought him awards and brickbats in equal measure. Perhaps the closest Brennan has got to the mainstream was producing Tinariwen's 2010 album *Tassili*, which won a Grammy. Its success might have seen him forge a career as an in-demand producer of professional world music heavyweights, but Brennan has preferred to journey by a more scenic route.

His 2015 production *I Have No Everything Here* credited to the Zomba Prison Project and featuring songs written and sung by Malawian high-security prisoners, was nominated for a

Grammy for Best World Music Album. There have also been three *Songlines Music Awards* nominations – one for a recording by survivors of Cambodia's murderous Khmer Rouge, and two for albums by the Pakistani *surti* singer Ustad Saami, whom Brennan recorded for the first time when the vocalist was in his mid-70s.

On the other hand, Brennan's critics have denounced his seemingly endless search 'to find unfortunate people and bring their music to the world' as an exploitative ploy cloaked in woke worthiness. It's a criticism that he readily takes on board. '*It is not lost on me that I can easily be accused... of exploitation,*' he admitted in his 2016 book, *How Music Dies (Or Lives): Field Recordings and the Battle for Democracy in the Arts* (reviewed in the April 2016 issue, #116). Yet he is unapologetic, for he sees his productions as correcting an imbalance. His mission is nothing less than the democratisation of music making. "In a sense, I'm a cheerleader," he says. "That

thousands of bands hailing from Los Angeles or London have a platform and are broadcast internationally, while not a single record is given a fair chance from countries with millions of citizens is a crime.”

Born in California in the late 1960s, Brennan was something of a latecomer to world music. He grew up as a typical American rock’n’roll kid, playing guitar in bands until he concluded that his records were among “the most atrocious ever made” and instead switched his energies into becoming a counsellor in anger-management and conflict resolution, working in schools, psychiatric hospitals, jails and drug-rehabilitation centres. He also turned to producing, beginning close to home with American folk music and earning Grammy nominations for helming albums by Ramblin’ Jack Elliott and Peter Case.

In his 40s by the time he made his first visit to Africa in 2009, he accompanied his Italian-Rwandan wife Marilena Delli and her Rwandan mother in 2009 to Kigali on an emotional pilgrimage to see family and to track down friends not heard from since the genocide of 1994. While there he came across The Good Ones, survivors of the slaughter and whose members included both Tutsi and Hutu singing about peace and reconciliation. Over the dozen years since then he has travelled the globe seeking out the voiceless and helping to give

them a platform, accompanied by his wife, a photographer and film-maker, who documents all of his projects on video.

Even when he produced Tinariwen, Brennan brought his own unique approach to the project. Five albums into their career, Brennan wanted to create something different to what they had done before, so they decamped for

“Music is everywhere because it is a survival instinct”

three weeks to a desert plateau in Algeria, where he produced a back-to-the-roots, predominantly acoustic album. However, it is his only world music project to embrace rockstar collaborations, with contributions from members of both Wilco

and TV on the Radio. He subsequently teamed Tinariwen’s rhythm section with the Tuvan throat singer Sainkho Namtchylak on her 2015 album *Like a Bird or Spirit, Not a Face*.

Yet such hybrid fusions are not his trademark. More typical of his search for authenticity and emotional truth have been the three albums he has recorded with Rwanda’s The Good Ones and a trio of records with the Malawi Mouse Boys, who play homemade instruments and eke out a living by selling deep-fried rodents as roadside snacks. In Rwanda and Burundi he recorded two albums with the Abatwa pygmy community, members of whom volunteered for the project and had never made music before. *Why (the War)?* (2020) was an album of songs by refugees from the conflict in Yemen, while in Ghana he recorded women who had been ostracised as witches on the album *I’ve Forgotten Now Who I Used to Be* (2020). Earlier this year he produced *We are an Island, but We’re Not Alone*, a surprising and sometimes startling insight into the songs of the Comoro Islands (hear a track on this issue’s covermount CD).

Brennan’s productions are seldom easy listening, but then they are not intended to be. “Music is everywhere because it’s a survival instinct” remains his maxim – and wherever he turns up next with his tape recorder and democratic approach to music-making, the results are certain to be fascinating. ♦

+ LISTEN Hear the track ‘The Devil Doesn’t Eat Fire, He Eats Papaya’ from *We Are an Island, but We’re Not Alone* on this issue’s covermount CD (track 13)

+ BOOK Brennan’s new book, *Muse Sick: A Music Manifesto in Fifty-Nine Notes*, will be reviewed next issue

WIN

We have three copies of *We Are an Island, but We’re Not Alone* to give away. To enter, answer: How many albums has Ian Brennan produced?

See p23 for competition rules

BEST ALBUMS



The Good Ones *Kigali Y' Izahabu*

(Dead Oceans, 2010)

Where Brennan’s world music adventure started, with a collection of simple, acoustic songs recorded on the back porch by a trio of genocide survivors. The spare sound is both humble and humbling and possesses a strange beauty. Reviewed in the Jan/Feb 2011 issue (#73).



Tinariwen *Tassili*

(V2, 2011)

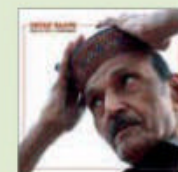
Brennan was never simply going to repeat what Tinariwen had done before. Instead, this is the group as we had never heard them, on a back-to-the-roots, predominantly acoustic album with an atmospheric campfire vibe. Reviewed in the October 2011 issue (#79).



Khmer Rouge Survivors *They Will Kill You, If You Cry*

(Glitterbeat Records, 2016)

Slow South-East Asian blues by elderly survivors of Pol Pot’s genocide. Stories of being child soldiers as well as odes to elephants played on rickety guitars, bamboo flutes and one-string fiddles. Reviewed in the October 2016 issue (#121).



Ustad Saami *God is Not a Terrorist*

(Glitterbeat Records, 2019)

Featuring the ancient *surti* style with its complex 49-note scale, the Pakistani singer Ustad Saami was 75 when Brennan produced this, the vocalist’s first ever album. A Top of the World in the April 2019 issue (#146).



Comorian *We Are an Island, but We're Not Alone*

(Glitterbeat Records, 2021)

Three artists – Soubi, Mmadi and D Alimzé – deliver songs from the little-explored Comoros Islands in the Indian ocean between Mozambique and Madagascar. Reviewed in the July 2021 issue (#169).

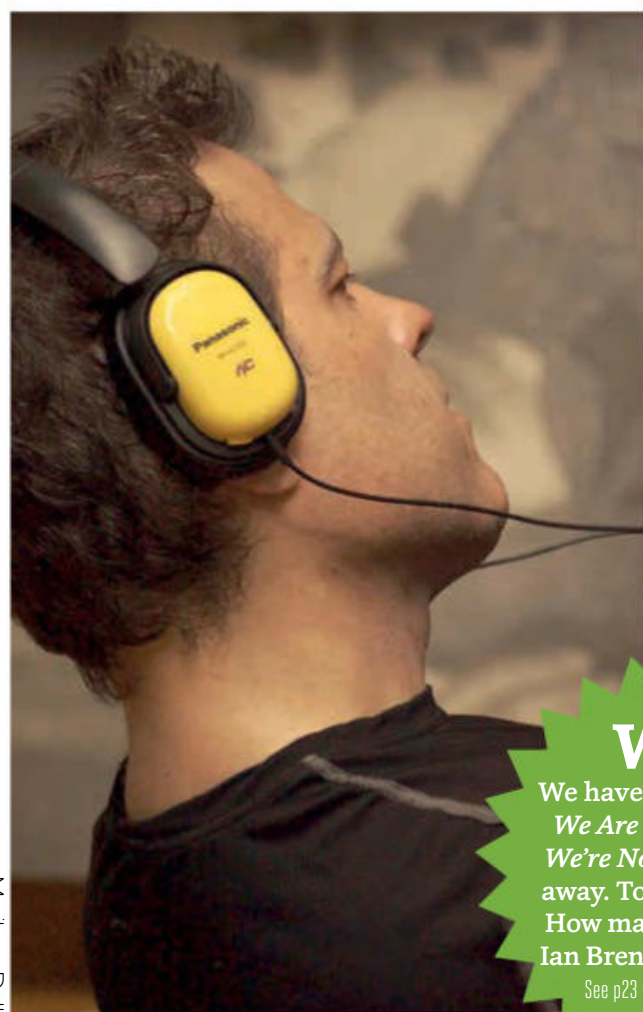
IF YOU LIKE IAN BRENNAN, THEN TRY...



Various Artists *The Bali Sessions: Living Art, Sounding Spirit*

(Rykodisc, 1999)

Grateful Dead drummer Mickey Hart made these field recordings on a visit to Bali, eschewing the most popular local styles in favour of lesser-known forms.



Marilena Delli



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17 Blackheath Halls, London
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21 Brewery Arts Centre, Kendal
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23 Alnwick Playhouse

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10 The Fire Station, Sunderland

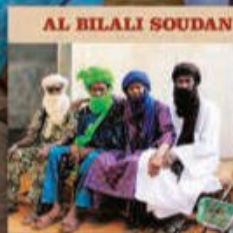
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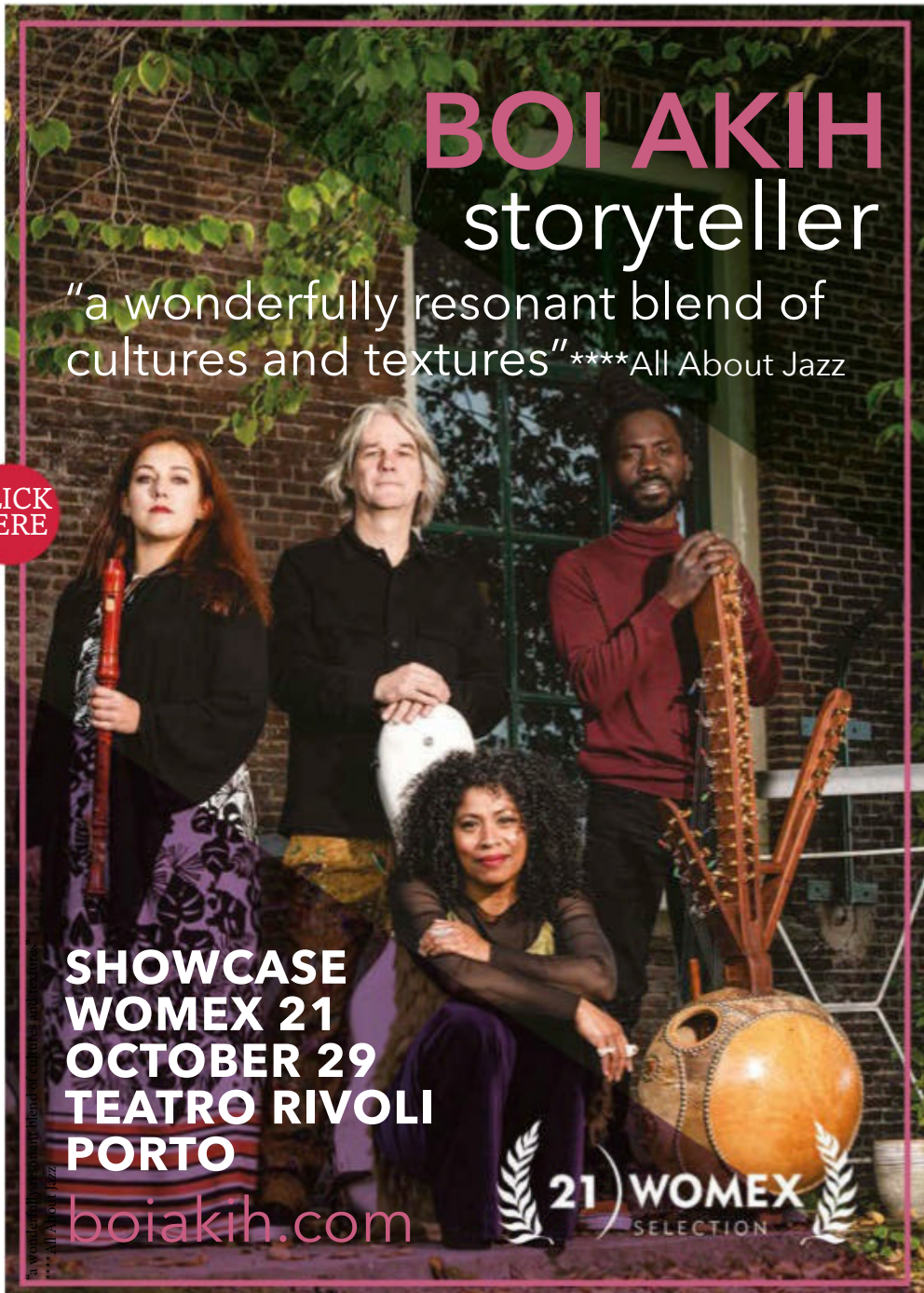


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Glasgow, Scotland

Scottish musician **Catriona Price** reflects on the topic of climate change and music's role in highlighting environmental concerns ahead of COP26

This November, Glasgow plays host to the UN Climate Change Conference – COP26. It seems like a perfect place to host the event – a major post-industrial city that boasts beautiful green spaces and is in close reach of the lochs and mountains of Scotland's west coast. The city has set a target for carbon neutrality by 2030, and aims to be one of Europe's greenest cities through its Sustainable Glasgow campaign. With climate change having a huge effect on our biggest social concerns – poverty, the availability of food and water, and immigration to name a few – it is the most urgent issue of our time. Naturally, the topic is becoming increasingly prevalent in artists' work, including my own.

I grew up aware of our need to protect the planet. My mum was always vehemently against using plastic bags, would send us to school with an apple rather than a plastic packet of crisps, and would religiously check the air miles on fruit in our local Co-op before buying. Cycling was encouraged (which is no joke in gale-force Orkney), and beach cleaning was a regular weekend activity. We were taught that it was our responsibility to look after our precious planet, vaguely aware of Greenpeace and others making a bigger noise. But it wasn't until relatively recently that my peers and I realised that we needed to be part of this noise.

As we know, the conversation about climate in the mainstream media has been incredibly overdue; scientists have been banging their heads against a brick wall for over 30 years. In true capitalist style, things haven't started to change until they've become desperate – "our house is on fire" as Greta Thunberg so

eloquently analogised. On the latest Twelfth Day album, *Face to Face*, we were inspired to write 'Keep Me' after watching the BBC documentary *Drowning in Plastic*. The song is from the perspective of Mother Nature, who is relieved that we've finally realised that drastic things need to be done to preserve her – 'stop trying to defeat me if you want to keep me.'

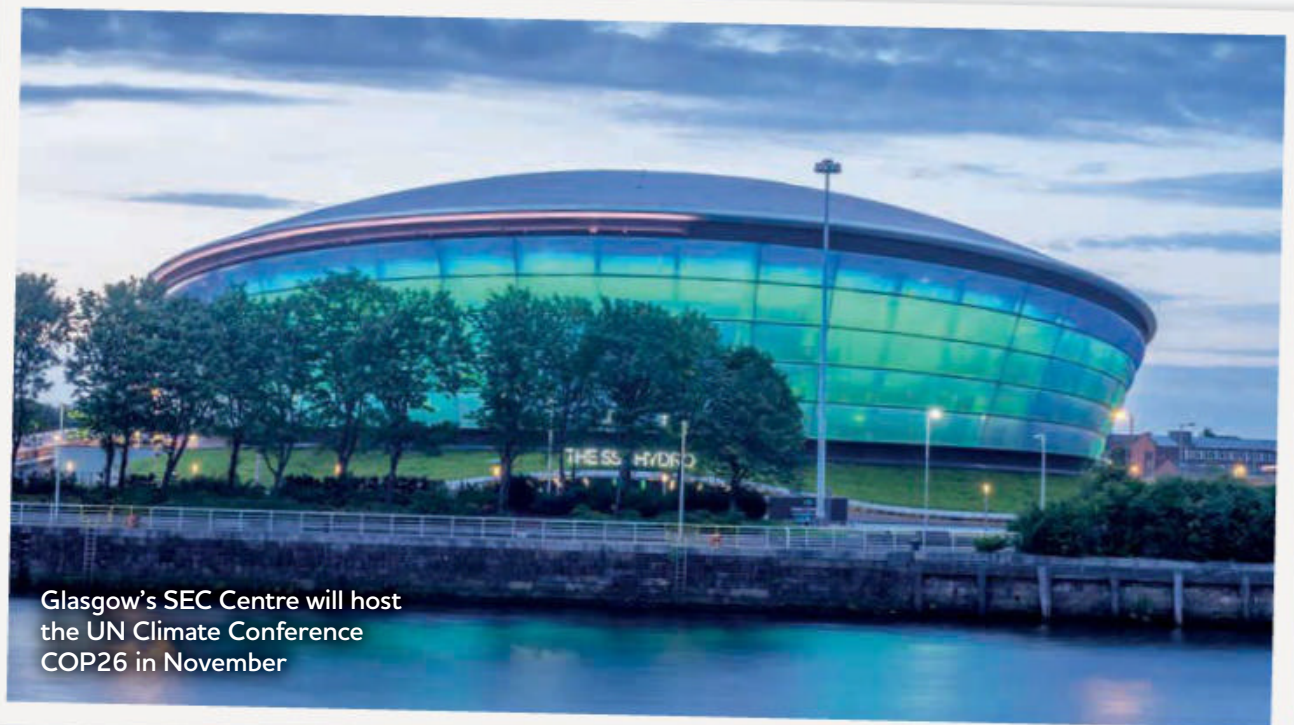
Arts funding body Creative Scotland have made changes to their application procedure, and applicants are now required to consider their project's environmental impact. Siobhan Anderson, music officer at Creative Scotland says, "we take this duty very seriously. In our continued drive to grow participation in arts and creativity and to help build a more diverse, equitable, and sustainable sector for the future, we're prioritising resources to affect fundamental changes in order to significantly reduce the environmental impact of our work and those we support. COP26 coming to Glasgow is an incredible opportunity and has sparked a wealth of innovative and inspiring projects across Scotland's artistic community."

We spent a glorious few weeks in Orkney and Shetland this summer recording a new Fara album. It takes its inspiration from the impressive renewable energy innovation that has been happening in Orkney for the past couple of decades. The European Marine Energy Centre is based there and with its abundance of wind and waves, Orkney has become the epicentre of global development

in these fields. The islands now produce more than 100% of their annual electricity demand from renewables and schemes such as ReFLEX Orkney are finding ways to use the energy locally before it goes into the national grid. It felt poignant to rehearse and record the album in the isles, immersed in the powerful, blustering elements that drove us to create it.

In 2020 I was commissioned by Celtic Connections to write a piece for their New Voices series. *Hert* took its inspiration from eight texts by a diverse set of Orcadian writers, with some of the literature that spoke to me centred on themes of climate change. The ethnographer and writer Laura Watts' book, *Energy at the End of the World*, fuelled one of the instrumentals, and lead me to Margaret Tait's poem 'Storms', which uses the power of an Orcadian storm as a metaphor for inner strength, and 'If' by Pam Beasant, a setting of which closes my piece. In it, Beasant imagines what would happen if rising sea levels flooded Orkney. It is a tender and emotional poem – both a love letter to the islands, and a warning call. 'I think though everything was gone, we would stay.' We can only hope that the powers that be listen to the science when they come to Glasgow in November, so that, generations from now, we can stay. ♦

+ ALBUMS Both Catriona Price's solo album *Hert* and the new Fara album will be released in early 2022



Jeff Whyte/AdobeStock



Catriona Price

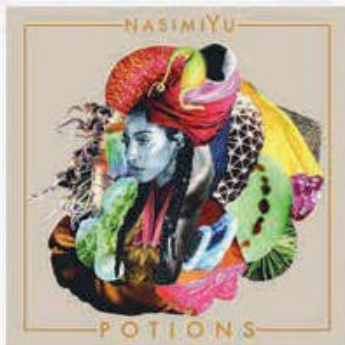
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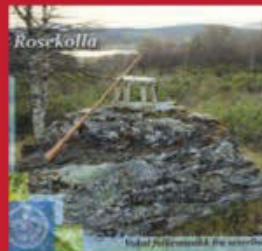
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Ha Su-yeon

Korean gayageum player and one-half of duo Dal:um with Hwang Hye-yeong



WHAT ARE YOU LISTENING TO?

Music from lots of different genres. I really enjoy turning on and listening to random playlists. A couple of artists that I am into these days are Ólafur Arnalds and boy band BTS, but I also like listening to several Korean indie bands.

YOUR ALL-TIME FAVOURITE ALBUMS?

The second album by the *gayageum* player Kyungso Park, *The Most Beautiful Connection*. Her music, tone, thoughts, emotions – I'm in love with it all.

MUSICIAN YOU MOST ADMIRE?

Hans Zimmer. His soundtrack for *The Little Prince* is fantastic.

FAVOURITE NEW ARTIST?

CelloGayageum, a duo of Austrian cellist Sol Daniel Kim and Korean gayageum player Da-young Yoon. Their harmony of east and west is very beautiful.

MEMORABLE MUSICAL ENCOUNTER?

Recently I had the chance to meet astounding gayageum player Do-Yeon Kim, whose distinctive musical style is very different from my own – to hear her play was fascinating and inspirational.

FIRST ALBUM YOU EVER BOUGHT?

It was an album by Groove Over Dose (g.o.d., who are a K-pop band), which I bought in the third grade. After I began to play the gayageum, I would chase down all the essential albums in the *gugak* sections of record shops.

+ ALBUM *Dal:um's most recent album, Similar & Different, was reviewed in our August/September 2021 issue (#170)*

Joseph Tawadros

Egyptian-Australian oud maestro with new album, *Hope in an Empty City*



WHAT ARE YOU LISTENING TO?

Oum Kalthoum, the great diva of Arabic song.

YOUR ALL-TIME FAVOURITE ALBUMS?

Keith Jarrett's *The Köln Concert* – it has a beautiful improvisational energy; John Abercrombie's *Timeless* – a pioneering record for electric guitar; and Jimmy Page & Robert Plant's *No Quarter*, where they worked with an Egyptian ensemble. That really opened my mind to fusion and collaboration.

MUSICIAN YOU MOST ADMIRE?

Oum Kalthoum. I love hearing her phrasing, her extended improvisations and the endless variety of vocal techniques. The more I listen, the more I learn and admire her.

FAVOURITE NEW ARTIST?

Layth Sidiq, a young Iraqi-Jordanian violinist with an incredible sense of phrasing and timing. He plays in a beautiful traditional Arabic style and has a wide knowledge of *maqamat*, but is equally comfortable with Indian, jazz, classical and everything between.

MEMORABLE MUSICAL ENCOUNTER?

Being approached by Zakir Hussain to perform with him and *sarangi* master Sultan Khan in a jam session for WOMADelaide in 2004. I had just turned 20 and was in the hotel foyer when Ustad Zakir introduced himself and asked me if I'd like to be involved in the session. I was gobsmacked and privileged to spend time with some Indian masters, learning and coming up with a meeting point for the music. Tinariwen were later added to the jam, so it was an especially memorable encounter.

+ ALBUM *Joseph Tawadros' Hope in an Empty City is reviewed this issue, see p71*

Kandy Guira

Burkina Faso vocalist with latest full-length, *Nagtaba*, set to drop



WHAT ARE YOU LISTENING TO?

So much! Youssoupha's *Neptune Terminus*, Johnny Clegg, Thandiswa Mazwai, Georges Ouédraogo, Brandy, Alicia Keys, Jowee Omicil, Lokua Kanza, Gaël Faye, Blick Bassy, Oumou Sangaré, Faada Freddy, Fally Ipupa... And a playlist of Nigerian music to get me in shape every morning: Davido, Wizkid, Yemi Alade, Teni, Burna Boy.

YOUR ALL-TIME FAVOURITE ALBUMS?

I don't have specific albums that stand out, more individual songs, such as Miriam Makeba's 'Malaika', Brenda Fassie's 'Vulindlela', Tina Turner's 'The Best' and Aretha Franklin's 'Respect'.

MUSICIAN YOU MOST ADMIRE?

South African superstar Miriam Makeba, for her personal journey and her impact on society. It was because of her that I realised that you could simultaneously change mindsets and entertain.

FAVOURITE NEW ARTIST?

Smarty, a young Burkinabé; Kolinga, I love their track 'Kongo'; *kora* player Lubiana; Burkinabé singer Nabalum and Céline Banza from the DRC with her superb collaboration with Youssoupha, 'Départ'.

MEMORABLE MUSICAL ENCOUNTER?

My meeting with Oumou Sangaré, who generously invited me to her house. This led to a collaboration that continues today. I also met Cesaria Evora after one of her concerts. We shared a very sweet and funny moment in her dressing room where she gave me lots of advice that still serves me today.

+ ALBUM *Kandy Guira's new album, Nagtaba, will be reviewed in the next issue*

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17	OCT	KINGS CROSS	Kings Place
24	OCT	BRENTFORD	Watermans Arts
13	NOV	HACKNEY	Chats Palace
14	NOV	N. FINCHLEY	artsdepot

Megson
little bird
the new album

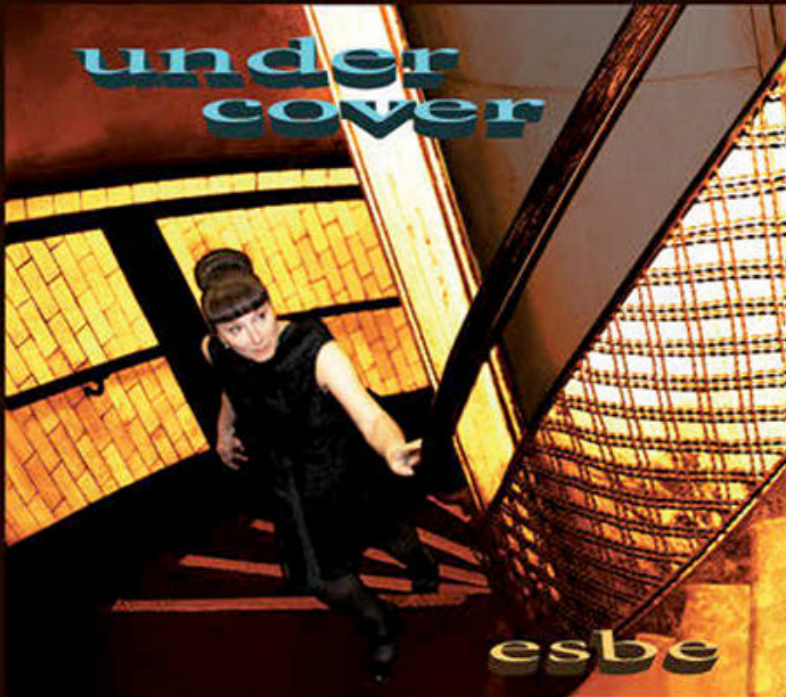
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critically acclaimed vocalist and producer
esbe



under cover
esbe

Songlines
Bold and dramatic arrangements

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Tastefully strange, haunting, artistic. A smashing success

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Sounds of Sudan

Nabra & Ligeti Quartet



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I hope this partnership is the beginning chapter in a life-long musical adventure".
David Harrington Kronos Quartet

Debut album "Jeenaki" out now



Read the full review in this issue
Listen and buy at Bandcamp or website:
<https://soundsofsudan.bandcamp.com/releases>
<https://knudstuwe.com/sounds-of-sudan>

PUULUUP

New album "Viimane suusataja"



"The Estonian duo Puuluup is a perfect example that the expression "Less is More" sometimes really works. With talharpas, very old four-stringed bowed lyres and their voices they create a astonishingly wide tonal range, especially when they combine it with electronics."
– *Lira music magazine*

Available now on all platforms and
puuluup.bandcamp.com

MY INSTRUMENT

Michael Levy and his lyre

Michael Levy speaks to Simon Broughton about his 'lyre of Apollo' explorations, which follow in the exalted footsteps of the ancient Greek masters

“When I was about 14 years old I heard this recording of Ravel's 'Pavane for a Dead Princess' played by Julian Bream and John Williams on two classical guitars. It sounded so beautiful and its modal tunes made me think of what an ancient lyre might sound like.” For Michael Levy, this kick-started his obsession with the lyre, although it was almost 25 years before he actually acquired an instrument on eBay. “The timbre of the instrument was like a musical magic carpet ride back in time. But it took me a long while to create music myself, to emulate this feeling the music gave to me and give it to others.” He's now made over 30 recordings, created music for exhibition soundscapes and had his 'Hymn to Zeus' incorporated into Rufus Wainwright's opera *Hadrian*.

“My musical mission is to carry on where the ancients left off – creating new music for the recreated ancient lyre, using ancient modes and intonations, with my melodic ideas often based on surviving ancient Greek musical fragments,” including the complete 'Song of Seikilos'. Seikilos is the name of the composer of music written on a Hellenistic stele dating from the first or second century AD, which is the oldest documented complete musical work. You can hear it performed by Levy on this month's covermount CD (track 14).

The ancient Greek-style lyre Levy uses, made by Luthieros based in Thessaloniki, Greece, is called the Lyre of Apollo III. “It's known as a *chelys* lyre – that's the ancient Greek word for tortoiseshell. They used a tortoiseshell as a resonator over which a skin was stretched to make the soundboard. The strings pass over a bridge and protruding out of the top are two horns, like the Elgin lyre in the British museum [dating from the fifth to fourth century BC].”

Professional musicians in ancient Greece generally played wooden *kithara* (from which we get the word guitar) because wood offers a much richer sound, but they copied the form of a tortoiseshell. “I do have an actual tortoiseshell lyre that Luthieros custom-made for me,” he explains. “No animal was harmed in the process as in Thessaloniki there are lots of tortoises hanging around in the forest and, when they die, they leave their shells lying around. It's got a very delicate, stifled tone because tortoiseshell is like a very thin bone, which isn't a very good resonator at all.”



Levy's Lyre of Apollo has 11 strings (ancient versions had anything between four and 12). He avoids equal temperament and prefers just intonation, which gives a purer sound. He's also been inspired by contemporary lyres in Africa, including the *simsimiyya* in Egypt, as played by El Tanbura, and *krar* players in Ethiopia. “One of the techniques is called 'block and strum.' It's like playing guitar in reverse. You block strings you don't want to sound and strum the open strings with your right hand (as practiced by *krar* players). If you look at pictures of ancient Greek *kithara* players, the left hand is in exactly the same position as that of a *krar* player. There are ancient texts that describe how specific intervals like the fourth and fifth sweeten the notes of a melody and, playing a lyre, are very ergonomic to pluck. You can pluck them easily with your left hand while playing the tune with the right. In just intonation you don't need any fancy stuff, because a fourth and a fifth weigh ten tons apiece. This notion that the ancients didn't have harmony is a myth, because you have those fourths and fifths and the *aulos* (double flute), which accompanied the lyre plays two notes at the same time.” ♦

+ **ONLINE** www.ancientlyre.com

+ **LISTEN** Hear Michael Levy performing 'Song of Seikilos' on this issue's covermount CD, track 14

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omarsosa.com **#SUBA2021** seckoukeita.com

bendigedig

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2021

Gig Guide



Songlines picks...

Justin Adams & Mauro Durante (pictured) (London, Oct 15 & 25)
Peppy duo deal in desert blues and *pizzica* for deft trancelike amalgams.

Catrin Finch & Seckou Keita (Wales & West, North & London, Oct 27, 29 & Nov 11)
Simpatico string pairing get to the harp of it.

Stella Chiweshe (London, Nov 3)
Catch the queen of *mbira* as she locks in mystic communion with the Shona spirit world.

Daoirí Farrell (North & Midlands, Nov 10-12)
Bouzouki-playing Dubliner sings of Irish heritage and history.

Fofoulah (South, Nov 6)
Afro-fusioneers wed dub and jazz improv to the *sabar*-rattling beats of Gambia and Senegal.

LONDON

6 OCT-17 NOV K-Music serious.org.uk/k-music; **8 OCT** Kanda Bongo Man Nell's; **8-17 OCT** Herne Hill Music Festival hernehillfestival.org; **9 OCT** Brighde Chaimbeul and Aidan O'Rourke Cafe OTO; **12 OCT** La Yegros Jazz Cafe; **13 OCT** Xhosa Cole, Bex Burch & Jon Scott + Tara Cunningham & Corrie Dick Amp Studios; **Carmen Souza** PizzaExpress Jazz Club; **15 OCT** Justin Adams & Mohamed Errebbaa The Silver Building **FREE**; **Saied Silbak** Grand Junction; **16 OCT** David Walters Jazz Cafe; **Bex Burch & Kim Macari + Maria Grapsa + Ell Kendall** Grand Junction; **Vula Viel + Skylla** Cafe OTO; **Oum** Grand Junction; **Afla Sackey & Afrik Bawantu** The Jago; **18 OCT** Bukky Leo: Fela Kuti's Birthday Jazz Cafe; **21 OCT**

Monsieur Doumani Rich Mix; **21-24 OCT** Darbar Festival Barbican darbar.org; **22-25 OCT** Return to London Town Festival returntolondontown.org; **23 OCT** Diwali Trafalgar Square **FREE** diwaliinlondon.com; **25 OCT** Justin Adams & Mauro Durante Green Note; **29 OCT** Nitin Sawhney RAH; **29 OCT-30 NOV** London Roots Festival londonrootsfestival.com; **30 OCT** The Ukrainians London Ukrainian Club Karpaty; **Carmen Souza** Woolwich Works; **3 NOV** Liraz Jazz Cafe; **Stella Chiweshe** Cafe OTO; **Arooj Aftab** Kings Place; **4 NOV** Manu Delago Elgar Room; **5 NOV** Waaju + Krar Collective + Barnaby Keen The Jago; **Branko + Dino D'Santiago** Earth; **Masma Dream World** Cafe OTO; **6 NOV** Transglobal Underground feat Natacha Atlas Jazz Cafe; **7 NOV** Sam Kelly & the Lost Boys Nell's; **9 NOV** Nihiloxica Jazz Cafe; **11 NOV** Catrin Finch &

Seckou Keita Cecil Sharp House; **Nishat Khan** QEH; **12-21 NOV** EFG London Jazz Festival efglondonjazzfestival.org.uk; **14 NOV** Sonu Nigam The SSE Arena; **20 NOV** Magpie's Nest Festival Grand Junction thenestcollective.co.uk

SOUTH

16 OCT Yaaba Funk De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea; **29 OCT** The Ukrainians The Prince Albert, Brighton; **3 NOV** Mehboob Nadeem & Gurdain Rayatt The Anvil, Basingstoke; **5 NOV** Manu Delago Turner Sims, Southampton; **6 NOV** Fofoulah Wiltshire Music Centre, Bradford-on-Avon; **Tannahill Weavers** Grayshott Folk Club; **7 NOV** Manu Delago The Hot Tin, Faversham; **13 NOV** Juan Martín Norden Farm, Maidenhead.

WALES & WEST

10 OCT Brighde Chaimbeul & Aidan O'Rourke Bristol Folk House; **14 OCT** Juan Martín The Great Barn, Hellens Manor; **27 OCT** Catrin Finch & Seckou Keita Acapela, Cardiff.

MIDLANDS

19-24 OCT Lichfield Festival of Folk lichfieldarts.org.uk; **22 OCT** The Baghdaddies Norwich Arts Centre; **25 OCT** Marouf Majidi Covered Market, Oxford; **29 OCT** Sarathy Korwar Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry; **4 NOV** Diwali Belgrave Road, Leicester visitleicester.info; **6 NOV** Sam Kelly & the Lost Boys Cambridge Junction; **9 NOV** Sam

www.songlines.co.uk/gigs All information correct at time of going to press. Email listings for print and online consideration to listings@songlines.co.uk

Gig Guide

Kelly & the Lost Boys Norwich Arts Centre; **11 NOV Daoirí Farrell** Upwood Village Hall, Huntingdon; **12 NOV Daoirí Farrell** Norwich Folk Club; **13 NOV Sonu Nigam** Resorts World Birmingham.

NORTH

10 OCT Olcay Bayir NCEM, York; **16 OCT Hartlepool Folk Day** FREE hartlepoolfolkfest.co.uk; **21 OCT Nina Rajarani & Srishti Kala** Sangam, Bradford; **21-24 OCT Manchester Folk Festival** manchesterfolkfestival.org.uk; **22-24 OCT Musicport** Whitby Pavilion musicportfestival.com; **23 OCT Rafiki Jazz** Kala Sangam, Bradford; **A Tribute to Jagjit Singh by Tauseef Akhtar & Co** Howard Assembly Room, Leeds; **27-28 OCT Mulatu Astatke** 24 Kitchen Street, Liverpool; **29 OCT Juan Martín** NCEM, York; **Catrin Finch & Seckou Keita with the RLPO** Liverpool Philharmonic Hall; **6 NOV William Rees Hoffman + Deepa Nair Rasiya & Mishra** Kala Sangam, Bradford; **Manu Delago** Future Yard, Birkenhead; **10 NOV Daoirí Farrell** Settle Victoria Hall.

SCOTLAND

11-15 OCT Blazin' in Beaully blazininbeaully.com; **29 OCT Cahalen Morrison** Glenbuchat Hall, Strathdon.

IRELAND

(Republic & Northern)

11-15 NOV Ennis Trad Fest ennistradfest.com.

TOURS

Breabach

Scottish folk powerhouse
8 OCT Lemon Tree, Aberdeen;
9 OCT CatStrand, New Galloway;
20 OCT Kings Place, London;
21 OCT The Fleece Inn, Bretforton;
22 OCT Otley Courthouse; **23 OCT** Selby Town Hall; **24 OCT** Nailsea Folk Club; **29 OCT** Tolbooth, Stirling; **30 OCT** Lanternhouse, Cumbernauld.
breabach.com

Budapest Cafe Orchestra

Riotous Balkan campfire party
9 OCT The Spring, Havant; **10 OCT** Kenton Theatre, Henley-on-Thames; **16 OCT** The David Hall, South Petherton; **17 OCT** St Mary's Church, Dorchester; **21 OCT** Ropetackle, Shoreham-by-Sea; **22 OCT** Riverhouse Barn, Walton-on-Thames.
budapestcafeorchestra.co.uk

Martin & Eliza Carthy

Set of intimate autumn dates
22 OCT Acapela, Cardiff; **23 OCT** Marine Theatre, Lyme Regis; **24 OCT** Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury; **27 OCT** Ushaw College, Durham; **28 OCT** The Globe Inn, Glossop; **30 OCT** Hertford St Andrew; **31 OCT** Hailsham Pavilion; **3 NOV** Wiltshire Music Centre, Bradford-on-Avon; **4 NOV** Ramsgate Music Hall; **5 NOV** Kings Place, London; **6 NOV** Otley Courthouse; **7 NOV** National Forest Folk Club, Moira; **9 NOV** Colchester Arts Centre.
eliza-carthy.com

Còig

Canadian folk four-piece
4 NOV Kings Place, London; **5 NOV** The Apex, Bury St Edmunds; **7 NOV** Nailsea Folk Club; **8 NOV** The Fleece Inn, Bretforton; **10 NOV** The Greystones, Sheffield; **11 NOV** Chidham Village Hall, Chichester; **12 NOV** Grayshott Folk Club; **13 NOV** Cambridge Junction; **14 NOV** Wiltshire Music Centre, Bradford-on-Avon.
coig.ca

Dervish

Jewel of Irish folk music
12 OCT Ropetackle, Shoreham-by-Sea; **13 OCT** The Apex, Bury St Edmunds; **14 OCT** Beck Theatre, Hayes; **15 OCT** The Brewhouse, Taunton; **16 OCT** Settle Victoria Hall; **17 OCT** Birmingham Town Hall; **21 OCT** Belfast International Arts Festival; **23 OCT** Patrick O'Keeffe Traditional Music Festival, Castleisland.
www.dervish.ie

Edgelarks

Devonshire folk duo
14 OCT The Greystones, Sheffield; **15 OCT** The HopBarn, Southwell; **27 OCT** The Plough, Great Torrington; **28 OCT** The Old Library, Bodmin; **29 OCT** Bishop's Castle Town Hall; **30 OCT** Alstonefield Village Hall, Ashbourne; **2 NOV** The Roses, Tewkesbury; **5 NOV** Canopy Theatre, Beccles; **6 NOV** Swanton Novers

Village Hall; **7 NOV** The Froize, Chillesford; **11 NOV** The Trades Club, Hebden Bridge; **12 NOV** West Kirby Arts Centre.
edgelarks.co.uk

Fara

Scottish fiddlers and a pianist
8 OCT Otley Courthouse; **9 OCT** Tolbooth, Stirling; **28 OCT** Upwood Village Hall, Huntingdon; **29 OCT** Stapleford Granary; **30 OCT** Masham Town Hall.
faramusic.co.uk

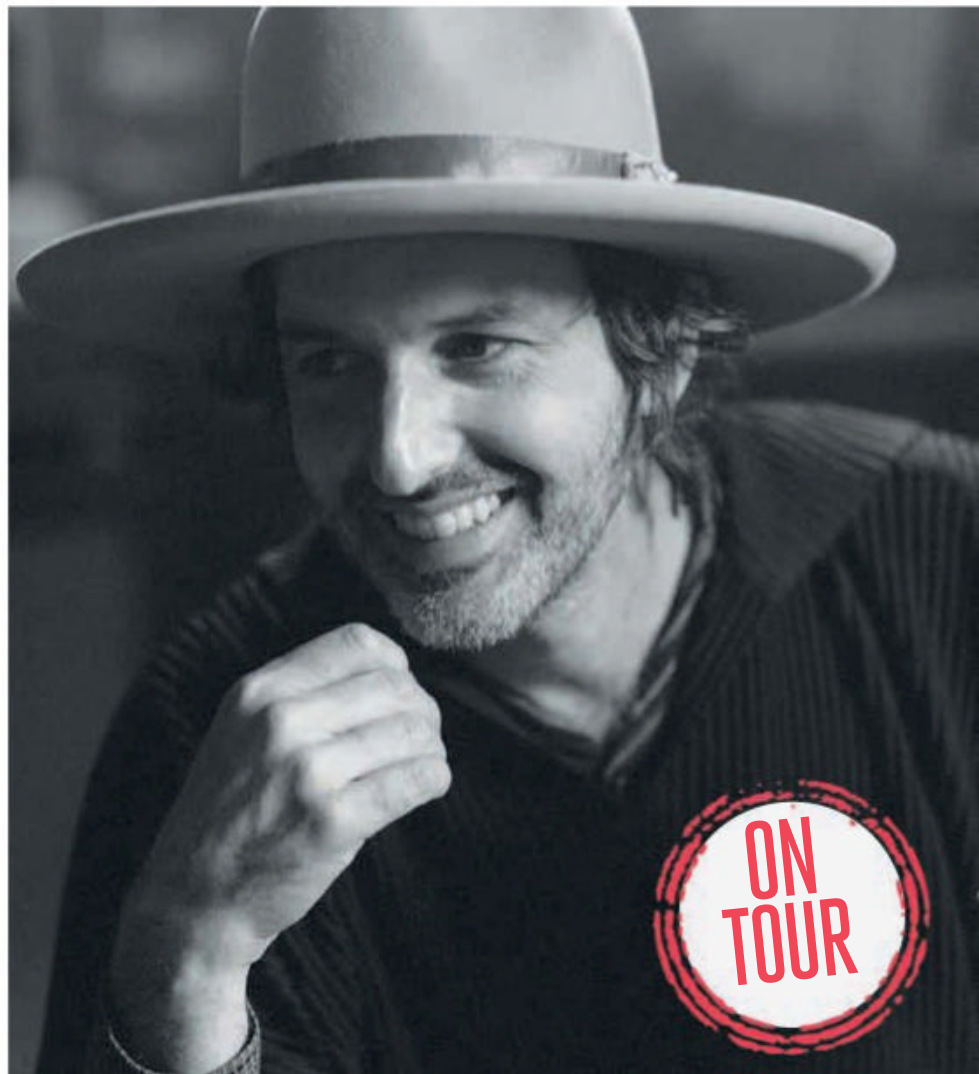
Fisherman's Friends

Sea shanties from Port Isaac
8 OCT Cambridge Corn Exchange;

9 OCT Ipswich Regent Theatre; **10 OCT** Portsmouth Guildhall; **4 NOV** Cheltenham Town Hall; **5 NOV** Cliffs Pavilion, Southend-on-Sea; **6 NOV** De Montfort Hall, Leicester; **7 NOV** Bournemouth Pavilion Theatre.
thefishermansfriends.com

Hannah James & Toby Kuhn

Duo hit the road with accordion, cello, voice and clogs
22 OCT Manchester Folk Festival; **30 OCT** Revelation, Ashford; **31 OCT** The Art House, Southampton; **1 NOV** The Boileroom, Guildford; **2 NOV** Pavilion Atrium, Worthing; **3 NOV**



Abby Ross

Joachim Cooder

Touring his Top of the World album

The much-lauded composer, multi-instrumentalist and *mbira* specialist's most recent album, *Over That Road I'm Bound*, recasts country music forerunners by banjo player Uncle Dave Macon, exhuming and revitalising the sounds of America's cultural past for a new generation through lyrical reinvention and musical mood adjustment. Taking this critically-acclaimed collection out on the road, Cooder further explores and develops tunes that his famous guitar-playing father had played for him and that he now sings to his own young children.

11 NOV De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea; **12 NOV** QEH, London; **13 NOV** The Apex, Bury St Edmunds; **15 NOV** St George's Bristol; **16 NOV** The Haymarket, Basingstoke; **17 NOV** Birmingham Town Hall; **20 NOV** Howard Assembly Room, Leeds; **21 NOV** RNCM, Manchester.
joachimcooder.com

Kitchen Garden Cafe, Birmingham; **4 NOV** Cecil Sharp House, London; **6 NOV** Helmsley Art Centre; **7 NOV** Old Cinema Launderette, Durham; **13 NOV** The Railway Inn, Winchester. hannahjamesmusic.com

Lau

The trio returns to the stage
30 OCT Tolbooth, Stirling; **31 OCT** The Queen's Hall, Edinburgh; **2 NOV** Acapela, Cardiff; **4 NOV** The Live Room, Saltaire; **5 NOV** Cambridge Junction; **6 NOV** Cecil Sharp House, London. lau-music.co.uk

Le Vent du Nord

Blowing in from Québec
14 OCT Ropetackle, Shoreham-by-Sea; **15 OCT** Settle Victoria Hall; **18 OCT** Forest Folk, North Boarhunt; **19 OCT** Gulbenkian, Canterbury; **20 OCT** Lakeside, Nottingham; **22 OCT** The Welfare, Ystradgynlais; **24 OCT** [am] Musicport, Whitby; [pm] The Kirkgate, Cockermouth. leventdunord.com

Sam Lee

See p94 for tour details

Leveret

The hares step out in October
8 OCT Reeth Memorial Hall, Richmond; **9 OCT** [online] Live to your Living Room; **10 OCT** CatStrand, New Galloway; **12 OCT** Howard Assembly Room, Leeds; **13 OCT** The Stoller Hall, Manchester; **14 OCT** Cecil Sharp House, London; **15 OCT** Wiltshire Music Centre, Bradford-on-Avon; **16 OCT** Lewes Saturday Folk Club; **17 OCT** Bamford Community Arts & Crafts, Hope Valley; **18 OCT** The Fleece Inn, Bretforton. leveretband.com

Making Tracks

Showcasing eight top musicians
1 NOV NCEM, York; **2 NOV** Settle Victoria Hall; **3 NOV** Firth Hall, Sheffield; **4 NOV** Lakeside, Nottingham; **5 NOV** The North Wall, Oxford; **6 NOV** Mount Pleasant Eco Park, Porthtowan; **10 NOV** St George's Bristol; **11 NOV** The Sanctuary, London. makingtracksmusic.org

Midnight Skyracer

Anglo-Irish bluegrass quintet
6 OCT The Atkinson, Southport; **8 OCT** St Mary's Church, Barry; **10 OCT** More Music, Morecambe; **11 OCT** Queen's Hall Arts Centre, Hexham; **12 OCT** The Greystones,

Sheffield; **13 OCT** Brewhouse, Burton-upon-Trent; **14 OCT** St George's Bristol; **15 OCT** Kings Place, London; **16 OCT** Bournemouth Folk Club; **17 OCT** Whitstable Sessions Music Club; **22 OCT** The Plough, Great Torrington; **24 OCT** Ashburton Arts Centre; **25 OCT** The Guildhall, St Ives. midnightskyracer.com

Peatbog Faeries

A stomping Scottish cèilidh
21 OCT Universal Hall, Findhorn; **23 OCT** The Platform, Morecambe; **24 OCT** Queen's Hall Arts Centre, Hexham; **26 OCT** Cambridge Junction; **28 OCT** The Great Barn, Hellens Manor; **29 OCT** The Garage, London; **30 OCT** Alnwick Playhouse. peatbogfaeries.com

Karine Polwart

Presents Still As Your Sleeping
8 OCT Sage Gateshead; **9 OCT** Cadogan Hall, London; **10 OCT** Liverpool Philharmonic Hall; **11 OCT** The Met, Bury; **12 OCT** Birmingham Town Hall; **13 OCT** St George's Bristol; **14 OCT** The Gate, Cardiff; **15 OCT** Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury; **16 OCT** The Stables, Milton Keynes; **17 OCT** The Apex, Bury St Edmunds. karinepolwart.com

The Rheingans Sisters

Pieces from their Receiver album
8 OCT RWCMD, Cardiff; **10 OCT** The Forge, Basingstoke; **12 OCT** The North Wall, Oxford; **13 OCT** Galeri Caernarfon; **14 OCT** Theatr Mwldan, Cardigan; **15 OCT** Wyese Arts Centre, Builth Wells; **17 OCT** Topsham Folk Club; **18 OCT** The Boileroom, Guildford. rheinganssisters.co.uk

Jack Rutter

Among the finest of young folk
8 OCT Roots Music Club, Doncaster; **9 OCT** The Talbot Theatre, Whitchurch; **13 OCT** Cecil Sharp House, London; **14 OCT** Topic Folk Club, Bradford; **15 OCT** Huntingdon Hall, Worcester; **16 OCT** Strode Theatre, Street; **21 OCT** Manchester Folk Festival. jackruttermusic.com

Salt House

Three Scots in collaboration
18 OCT Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh; **19 OCT** Crafts & Things, Glencoe; **20 OCT** The Glad Cafe, Glasgow; **21 OCT** Upwood Village



Islandman

Psychedelic Turkish trip

Resuming their boundary breaking, shamamic fantasy-zone assault on the world music status quo, Tolga Büyük's Istanbul-based space-funk crew announce another sure-to-be uplifting series of UK live dates. Expect deeply hypnotic downtempo confluences of Turkish psychedelia and East African-influenced rhythms as Büyük, in tandem with mainstays Eralp Güven (percussion) and Erdem Başer (guitars), draw heavily on their latest album, *Godless Ceremony* (see p68), an intoxicating collection that sees a raft of additional global flavours enhancing the Anatolian mix, from incendiary desert blues, Tibetan flutes and Hindustani *tablas* to echo-chamber dub rumble, blissful Balearic beats and bewitching house grooves.

5 NOV The Crescent, York; **6 NOV** Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham; **7 NOV** Future Yard, Birkenhead; **8 NOV** YES, Manchester; **9 NOV** Headrow House, Leeds; **10 NOV** Jazz Cafe, London; **12 NOV** The Cornish Bank, Falmouth; **13 NOV** The Jam Jar, Bristol; **14 NOV** Oxford Academy. linktr.ee/islandman

Gig Guide

Hall, Huntingdon; **23 OCT** The Stables, Milton Keynes; **24 OCT** Bluestone Brewery, Newport; **26 OCT** [online] Live to your Living Room; **27 OCT** Cecil Sharp House, London; **28 OCT** Firth Hall, Sheffield; **29 OCT** Thimblemill Library, Smethwick; **30 OCT** The Ropewalk, Barton-upon-Humber.
salthousemusic.com

Show of Hands

The good times are a'coming!

26 OCT The Beehive, Honiton; **27 OCT** The Alban Arena, St Albans; **28 OCT** St Mary's Arts Centre, Sandwich; **29 OCT** Union Chapel, London; **3 NOV** Birmingham Town Hall; **4 NOV** Buxton Opera House; **5 NOV** Victoria Theatre, Halifax; **6 NOV** Gala Theatre, Durham; **10 NOV** Lighthouse, Poole; **11 NOV** The Apex, Bury St Edmunds; **12 NOV** De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea; **13 NOV** Westlands, Yeovil.
showofhands.co.uk

Spiers & Boden

With new album, Fallow Ground

8 OCT Revelation, Ashford; **9 OCT** The Spiers & Boden Festival, Cecil Sharp House, London; **10 OCT** The Theatre, Chipping Norton; **11 OCT** Nettlebed Folk Club; **12 OCT** The Corn Hall, Diss; **16 OCT** Hartlepool Folk Day; **18 OCT** Colchester Arts Centre; **19 OCT** Cambridge Junction; **20 OCT** Pocklington Arts Centre; **21 OCT** Manchester Folk Festival; **22 OCT** The Live Room, Saltaire; **24 OCT** [two shows] Music Room, Liverpool; **25 OCT** Neuadd Ogwen, Bethesda; **26 OCT** Aberystwyth Arts Centre.
spiersandboden.com

Talisk

Fiery instrumental folk trio

3 NOV Perth Theatre; **4 NOV** Eastgate, Peebles; **5 NOV** The Tunnels,



Dominic Tyler

Sam Lee

Flights of the bird man

Folk singer, song hunter, environmental campaigner and nightingale enthusiast Sam Lee embarks on his *Old Wow+* tour, performing music from his critically acclaimed full-length work, *Old Wow* (a Top of the World review in the March 2020, #155), a luscious long-player reflecting its maker's passions for folk song and the natural world. Coinciding with these shows, Lee is releasing a special tour edition of the album, which adds six bonus tracks to the original collection.

13 OCT Norwich Arts Centre; **14 OCT** Firth Hall, Sheffield; **17 OCT** The Trades Club, Hebden Bridge; **18 OCT** Storyhouse, Chester; **20 OCT** St George's Bristol; **21 OCT** Turner Sims, Southampton; **23 OCT** Manchester Folk Festival; **24 OCT** More Music, Morecambe; **25 OCT** Colchester Arts Centre; **31 OCT** The Sub Rooms, Stroud; **2 NOV** The Old Market, Brighton; **4 NOV** St Mary's Church, Totnes; **5 NOV** The Pound, Corsham; **6 NOV** St Paul's Church, Birmingham; **7 NOV** Goldmark Gallery, Uppingham; **11 NOV** Union Chapel, London.
samleesong.co.uk

Aberdeen; **6 NOV** Tolbooth, Stirling; **7 NOV** Music Room, Liverpool; **8 NOV** Nettlebed Folk Club; **9 NOV** The Tolmen Centre, Falmouth; **10 NOV** Kings Place, London; **11 NOV** Cambridge Junction; **12 NOV** The Kirkgate, Cockermouth; **13 NOV** The Brewery, Kendal; **14 NOV** Howard Assembly Rooms, Leeds.
talisk.co.uk

Kathryn Tickell & The Darkening

Northumbrian piper with band

13 OCT Huntingdon Hall, Worcester;

16 OCT Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden; **17 OCT** Blackheath Halls, London; **18 OCT** Nettlebed Folk Club; **20 OCT** Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall, York; **21 OCT** The Brewery, Kendal; **22 OCT** Manchester Folk Festival; **23 OCT** Alnwick Playhouse.
kathryntickell.com

Dan Walsh

Acclaimed clawhammer banjoist

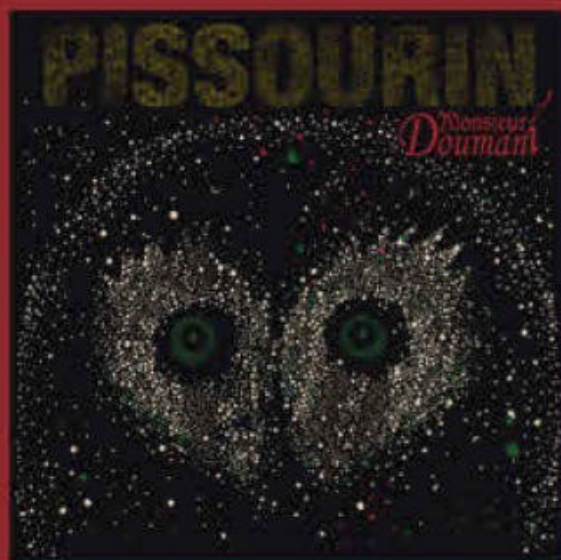
10 OCT Riverhouse Barn, Walton-on-Thames; **21 OCT** Ashcroft Arts Centre, Fareham; **22 OCT** Forest Arts, New Milton; **23 OCT** West End

Centre, Aldershot; **12 NOV** Conquest Theatre, Bromyard; **18 NOV** The Hyde Tavern, Winchester.
danwalshbanjo.co.uk

Cleveland Watkiss

Celebrating the Great Jamaican Songbook

25 OCT Komedia, Brighton; **27 OCT** Òran Mór, Glasgow; **28 OCT** Hallé St Peter's, Manchester; **29 OCT** Howard Assembly Room, Leeds; **30 OCT** mac, Birmingham; **31 OCT** EarH, London.
clevelandwatkiss.co.uk



MONSIEUR DOUMANI : Pissourin

"Cypriot trio inventively explore the dark night of the soul...one of the most interesting and exciting ensembles around." -- *Songlines* ★★★★★

UK tour dates:

October 21st: Rich Mix, London

October 22nd: Musicport Festival, Whitby

www.glitterbeat.com / distributed in the UK by Proper



"Divine!" - DJ Ritu, Resonance FM (London UK)



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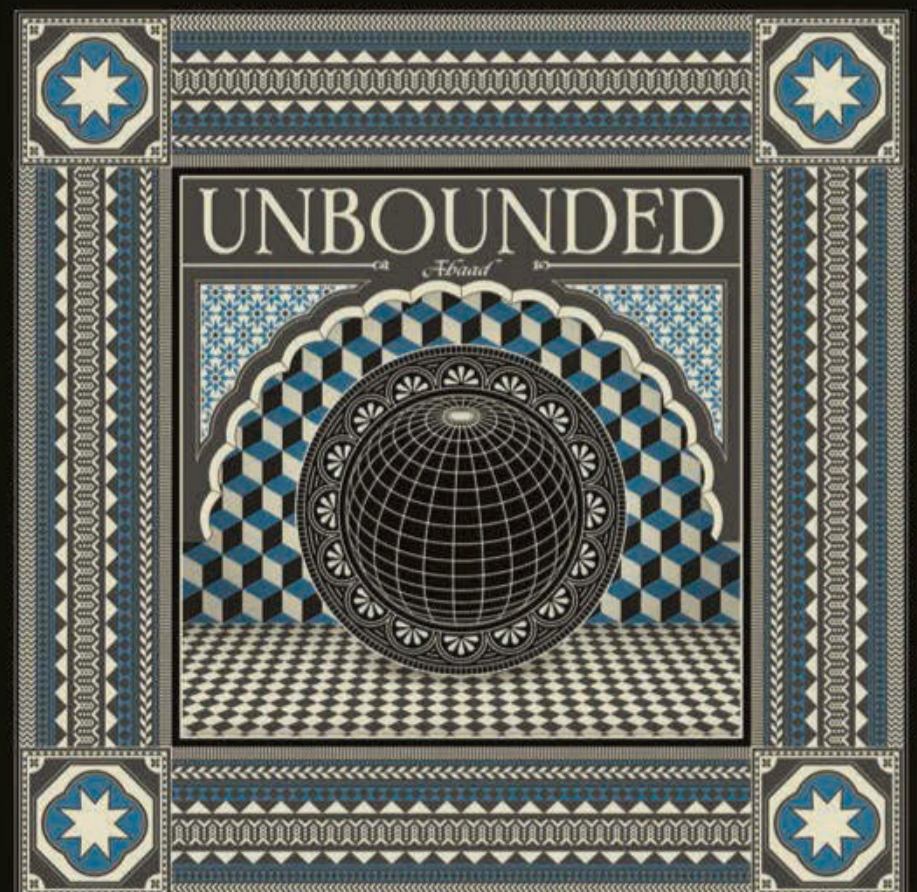
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Apparently vinyls are killing the planet, while streaming is also bad news for the environment... What's a music lover to do? **Russ Slater** offers up his essential guide for eco-friendly home-listening

A peculiar trait of mainstream media, it seems, is that they like to bait us whenever possible, making things that we've long taken for granted instantly repugnant. Drinking red wine at room temperature? You've got to be joking. Still storing your tomatoes in the fridge? Think again. And you know those vinyl records you've been buying? Well, they're killing the planet. Hold on! But I just read that music streaming is the worst thing for the climate since the Industrial Age. Well, it turns out that both are true (although I may be over-exaggerating the Industrial Age bit), which means that every time I listen to Sam Lee extoll the virtues of nature, Joni Mitchell sing about paving paradise or the Kogi of Lion's Drums' *Kagabas* inform me we're making some big mistakes, I'm actually harming the very environment those artists are wanting to save. What is a boy to do?

Well, research (ie Google) is the answer these days and that's exactly what I did, finding a study from University of Oslo professor Kyle Devine, who has clearly been looking at the environmental impact of music for many years. He found that, in line with the drop in physical music being sold, the amount of plastic used to make music has decreased dramatically, going from a peak of 58 million kilograms of plastic in 1977 (blame Fleetwood Mac) to just eight million kilograms in 2016. However, that's where the good news ends, as he found that the emergence of streaming has resulted in greenhouse gas emissions from the recorded music industry rising from 140 million kilograms in 1977 to somewhere between 200 million kilograms and over 350 million kilograms in the US alone in 2016. As with everything streaming-related it seems there's little transparency, but he has based his findings on how much electricity is needed to store, access and listen to digital music. Which brought me to one crucial bit of information. The data centres that are responsible for housing all the digital music, as well as all the streaming video and whatever other data we access, are now responsible for about 2% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, putting them on a par with the airline industry. It's still some way from the 12% of emissions created by road transport and the roughly 25% that is the culpa of the food industry. But wait a second, I'm heading down a rabbit hole...

Let's try and look at this eco-friendly music thing in macro. If every time you listen to music digitally it uses energy, then how can we reduce it? Well, it's simple, we've got to pare down. Don't watch a video, just listen to the music, that will save a bit. And do you really need that track in a lossless format? Just

get a bog-standard mp3, that'll save a little bit more. Did you say there's a radio edit? Let's cut to the chase then, no need for an extended version is there really? Saving bit by bit. Bonus tracks, you say? I'll stick with the essentials, thanks. It's the old adage: why buy the 13-CD and DVD box set of *Sign O' the Times* when 16 mp3s will do? How about just listening to the first five seconds of each song, and humming the rest from memory? Okay, maybe I've gone too far now.

Honestly, I still don't know if I should be streaming or putting a record or CD on. Intriguingly, an article by *The Conversation* has worked out the best green strategy. Second-hand is the clear winner, with brownie points for rare gold plucked from charity shops or essentials from the wantlist found at pastry-fumed vinyl fairs, especially when the ludicrous asking price is haggled down to a number just the right side of uncomfortable. After that, it all depends on how

many times you are going to listen to the music. If you're only going to listen a couple of times, then go for streaming. But if you're certain that you're going to keep coming back to it, then physical is best. They estimate that streaming an album more than 27 times over the internet will use more energy than it takes to produce and manufacture a CD for that same music. So, it's simple, it's the 27x Rule. Calculate your enjoyment when

first hearing a song from an album. Would you want to hear it an additional 27 times? If so, then buy the record. It's a strategy that we are going to implement here at *Songlines* (I just need to inform the editors...), introducing a handy extra gauge for each review whereby, in addition to our Top of the World rankings, we would award an extra 27x badge to those we feel are 'environmentally-worthy' of your money. It's what Mother Earth would have wanted.

Or maybe I'm missing the point. I need to think about this a little deeper, think outside of the box. There is no doubt that we have a regressive tendency, just look at all those dusty records (has no-one told the general populace that we're still buying a technology that launched commercially in the 1930s?). We're fighting the clean sheen of modern productions for something rawer, more real, something tangible that we can hold or with the authenticate hiss of tape or crackle and pop of a needle that lets us feel the music is alive. Surely the next step is to plug in the gramophone. No, let's skip that, it's time to get the banjo out, whet the whistle and have a hoedown. Everyone come round to mine and grab an instrument, it's the weekend, and the music is about to begin. Can I get a carbon footprint on that? ♦

How about just listening to the first five seconds of each song, and humming the rest from memory?

ABOUT RUSS

A freelance writer passionate about Latin American music and culture, Russ is the editor of *Sounds and Colours* and a long-time contributor to *Songlines*, where he currently serves as news editor.

LATIN AMERICAN
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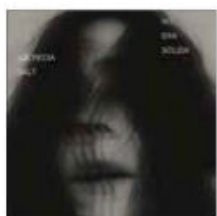
Pachamama's radical message is being channelled, oscillated, mixed and mashed by a new wave of South American musicians, DJs, rappers and ravers (read more on p32). **Chris Moss** selects the top ten highlights

**01 Barrio Lindo**
Fulgor

(Shika Shika, 2019)

Argentinian *murga*, Brazilian *chocalho*, Ecuadorean *San*

Juanito and rootless reggaeton rhythms inform this chilled-out celebration of dance culture and the natural world. Panpipes collide with old-school synths and wilderness sounds, and you can never quite tell which is a tweet, which a bleep. Barrio Lindo (aka Agustín Rivaldo) is joined on several tracks here by fellow Argentinian electro-ethnomusic producer Jin Yerei (aka Federico Sánchez) and Ecuadorian band Huaira.

**02 Lucrecia Dalt**
No Era Sólida

(RVNG Intl, 2020)

Colombian-born, Berlin-based Lucrecia Dalt's

previous albums featured field recordings and geological themes; she had formally trained as a geotechnical engineer. Here, conceptual compositions in the Laurie Anderson mould take their cue from the title (which translates as 'She/It Wasn't Solid'), exploring the way rhythms and melodies dissolve, merge and lose substance. 'Espesa' sounds like a frog, 'Suprema' like a rustling forest, but nothing lasts, nothing is certain, nothing survives. A percentage of sales go to environmental charity Tierra Digna.

**03 Rodrigo Gallardo & Nicola Cruz**
El Origen

(Wonderwheel, 2017)

Chilean Rodrigo Gallardo – lead singer of Matanza – and French-born Quito, Ecuador-based DJ Nicola Cruz update the *nueva canción* groove here, mixing in *altiplano* sounds, strong percussion-led riffs, spacey *charango* melodies and an uncompromising eco-political message.

**04 Kaê Guajajara**
Wiramiri

(Kaê Guajajara, 2020)

Yet to release a full album, Kaê Guajajara's second EP

splices together hip-hop, funk *carioca* and traditional music – with lots of flute and moody drones – into songs of resistance. She takes her surname from her ethnic group, based in the Amazonian part of Maranhão state in north-eastern Brazil, and sings – powerfully, mesmerisingly – in her mother tongue Ze'egete (literally 'Good Speech') and Portuguese.

**05 King Coya**
Terra de King Coya

(ZZK Records, 2018)

King Coya is the alter ego of composer Gaby Kerpel,

sometime collaborator of Argentinian dance troupe De La Guarda, who started channelling Andean spirits and themes on his 2003 album *Carnabailito*. For *Terra de King Coya*, he teams up with friends from Zizek Club in Buenos Aires, playing *ronroco*, *tarka* and other high plains instruments.

**06 Kunumi MC**
Todo Dia é Dia de Índio

(Bico do Corvo, 2018)

Jungle sounds fade in and out of reggae-inflected raps delivered in Guarani and Brazilian Portuguese. On the track 'Literatura Nativa' the sound is pared back to just tribal percussion, woodwind and shamanistic exhortations. Kunumi MC, who now goes by the name Owerá (meaning 'Lightning'), hops naturally between urban beats and folksy refrains.

**07 Monte**
Mirla

(Monte, 2020)

Bomba Estéreo's Simón Mejía, working under his solo

moniker, offers understated incantations that weave together birdsong, bubbling streams and gentle *charango* rhythms, building towards a sublime homage to nature. Reviewed in the January/February 2021 issue (#164).

**08 Chango Spasiuk & Chancha Via Circuito**
Pino Europeo

(Chango Spasiuk, 2018)

Pedro Canale (aka Chancha Via Circuito) is best known as a leading light in Argentina's electro-*cumbia* scene. Here he hooks up with *chamamé* accordion wizard Chango Spasiuk for an ancestral journey through polka and dub, red-earth patios and humid dance floors.

**09 Various Artists**
Luzmila Carpio Meets ZZK

(ZZK Records, 2015)

The Bolivian singer's wild, warbling, high-pitched vocals float over traditional instruments during an arresting series of seven remixes by DJs and producers from Buenos Aires' ZZK label. A great introduction to neo-electronica and a cool gateway to Carpio's untreated folk material.

**10 Various Artists**
Peru: Andean Music of Life, Work and Celebration

(Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 2015)

Archive field recordings documenting music of courtship, marriage, labour, harvest and death rituals, featuring *chiska*, *chirisuya*, *charango*, *pinquillo*, *quena* and vocals in the Andean lingua franca, Quechua – an extensive collection, both timeless and raw.

+ PLAYLIST Check out our Essential 10 playlists at www.bit.ly/songlinesspotify

+ LET US KNOW Have another suggestion? Get in touch, letters@songlines.co.uk

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