

de Lugendo and guitarist Petit Poisson. Guitar solos lasting minutes, honeysweet vocals, non-stop drum rolls and a host of swinging dance steps fanned the soukous fire to great heights, transforming the venue into a steamy Congolese nightclub. This ultimate party band never seemed to tire and played a selection of songs from the past 50 years including many hits to which the audience sang along at the top of their lungs. It was well after midnight when Zaïko Langa Langa played their final number and this exuberant Congolese dance party came to an end.

BASTIAAN SPRINGER

WOMADelaide

Adelaide, Australia, March 6-9

Just before the world changed forever came a model of a world we'd all love to live in: WOMADelaide, the open-air festival set in the magnificent surrounds of Botanic Park in Adelaide, South Australia. Diverse and friendly, colourful and vibrant, this 27th edition welcomed more than 500 artists from over 30 countries to perform on eight stages, two of them arena-sized. With only one notable no-show (popular Australian singer-songwriter Matt Corby stepped in when Ziggy Marley pulled out of his headline slot), the line-up was what it said on the tin. Malian supergroup Trio Da Kali, who deftly teamed up with local innovators Pocket String Quartet, dazzled on the Friday alongside the slick old school mambo of Cuban juggernaut and *Songlines Music Awards* winners Orquesta Akokán, while Papua New Guinea pop singer Ngaiire continued her big-voiced trajectory despite a lack of strong material. Saturday highlights were many: harp/*kora* duo Catrin Finch & Seckou Keita sent afternoon sparkles across bodies lying blissfully on the grass, and Pakistani singer septuagenarian Ustad Saami deployed his astounding 49-note Surti scale with his sons on *tambura* and hand percussion. Young female indigenous Australian choir Spinifex Gum delighted with their musical snapshots of life in the arid Pilbara region of north-western Australia (an area twice the size of the UK), as co-created with the Cat Empire's Felix Reibl and Ollie McGill (also present); Deline Briscoe, a Yalanji songwoman from Queensland's Daintree region, gifted a heart-warming set that mixed traditional Yalanjoy singing with jazz, hip-hop and soul. The great Salif Keita was there with an all-Malian

band featuring Mamadou Diabaté, Toumani's brother, on *kora*, with the 70-year-old star visibly pacing himself until a rocking, jacket-off second half. Impressive, too, were Sunday's Liniker e os Caramelows, whose self-styled 'funzy' sound is a fusion of soul and Brazilian grooves, and South African DJ Themba, whose rootsy deep house music had us dancing, hands-in-the-air, under a full moon.

JANE CORNWELL

KZLK

Borealis Festival, Landmark, Bergen, Norway, March 7

The Borealis festival is dedicated to experimental music, embracing a very wide range of sounds, from chamber groups to electronic music, and highly attuned to additional elements, such as dance, video, and performance art. Its late-night scene took off at Landmark, part of an arts venue complex that surrounds the octagonal lake of Lille Lungegårdsvannet. A diverse triple bill featured Newcastle garage punkers Blóm, the Kenyan MC Yallah and the artist known as KZLK, direct from Cairo. The latter was an absolute highlight of the weekend.

KZLK is part of the underground Hizz Collective (label, residency, record store), taking sampled cassette root-elements to comment on the commercialisation of the electro-*chaabi* scene. Also known as *mahraganat*, it's been active for around a decade now, the style having recently been officially banned in Egypt. This was the first performance

of KZLK's *Lstefa* project, but he always makes a point of striving towards preparing a fresh sequence for every gig, blending his laptop manipulations with visual backdrops.

KZLK used various table-top tools and a wah-wah foot pedal to manipulate his raw sonic material, completely concentrated, and looking very much like he was stroking a feline companion, coaxing out warped and wefted, time-flow-distorted grooves, heavily dubbed into a swirling syrup that turned Cairo-trad instrumentation into a deeply dubbed, immersive panorama. A Lynchian hallucinatory swirl was designed to make the listener feel like they were drunk or drugged, or preferably both, even if they were neither. It was a kind of artificially induced slow-motion sway, drifting in front of roiling crowd-scene video materials, themselves also manipulated into blinking abstraction.

MARTIN LONGLEY

Simon Thacker's Svava-Kanti

Anatomy Lecture Theatre, Summerhall, Edinburgh, Scotland, March 15

Svava-Kanti's splendidly colourful attire resonated with the luxuriant Indian folk music on offer, all the more striking for being set against the drab backdrop of one of Edinburgh's most austere venues. This was the final concert of the tour of Scotland and northern England by Simon Thacker's Svava-Kanti, a group brought together to expand

on mystical Bengali Baul folk music as viewed through Thacker's own Western classical lens. Tonight's concert was by the Baul, rather than the Hindustani/Karnatic iteration of this group, the former having existed in tonight's format since 2016 when they played the Dhaka International Folk Festival to an audience of 60,000.

Completing Scottish guitarist Thacker's quartet were virtuosos Bangladeshi Baul singer Farida Yasmin; from Santiniketan, West Bengal the charismatic singer and accomplished *khomok* musician Raju Das Baul; and Kolkata *tabla* maestro Sunayana Ghosh. All arrangements were by Thacker, with one tune, the more Western classically-influenced 'Prabhava', composed by him.

Thacker introduced each song with an English translation of the striking lyrics, most notable being those written by Baul saint Lalou Fakir (such as 'Dil Doriyar Majhe') and Bengali polymath Rabindranath Tagore ('Ekla Chalo Re'). The music was exquisite. My Bengali-speaking companion attested to Yasmin's superb diction while I was struck by her purity of tone and dramatic poise. Meanwhile Baul's *khomok* seemed intuitively aligned with Thacker's guitar, his diction marginally less clear as he danced irrepresibly to his own ankle bells. Team player Ghosh generated a spider's web of *tabla* rhythms, while Thacker's formidable guitar evidenced his many world music influences.

FIONA MACTAGGART



Simon Thacker's Svava-Kanti

Jeetho Collins