

# Fusion REVIEWS



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OF THE  
WORLD



## Keleketla! Keleketla!

Ahead of Our Time (58 mins)



Expansive collaborative project, from Joburg to LA and beyond



Born out of an encounter between Ruth Daniel of the charity In Place of War and Johannesburg's Keleketla! Library in-house artists Rangoato Hlasane and Malose Malahela – who were then introduced to Ninja Tune founders Coldcut – this outwardly looking album brings together collaborators from the immediate South African jazz scene and artists based in the UK.

Political in intent, its opener 'Future Toyi Toyi' – recorded in the Khayelitsha township – features hip-hop activists Soundz of the South. Later, 'Papua Merdeka' features a call from Benny Wenda for the liberation of West Papua from the strictures of Indonesian

rule, while 'Freedom Groove' is powerful and propulsive, spearheaded by a call to arms from Los Angeles' Watts Prophets.

These diplomatic demands are tempered with moments of optimism. 'International Love Affair' is a straight-up Afrobeat stomper, with a soulful chorus and some fine organ playing from Dele Sosimi, while 'Crystallise' features a killer contribution from MC Yugen Blakrok, alongside high-octane electronic beats and scintillating sax lines from Tamar Osborn.

While often stretched in terms of its ambition, with no fewer than two dozen collaborators, the project is a bold slice of Afrobeat-driven jazz, interspersed with spoken word, and global dance forms.

ALEX DE LACEY

TRACK TO TRY *Crystallise*

individuals teaching music into fully fledged performing ensembles. This technique was taken to the next level for 'Mix the City', an audiovisual representation of varying metropolises, starting with Tel-Aviv in his home country Israel. *Wachaga* is a similarly bold reworking, this time of field

recordings from the Wachaga nation based in the foothills of Tanzania.

Dislocating musical work with distinct community meaning, and re-rendering this as part of a sonic adventure, however, requires a deft touch and serious consideration of the function

of creative practice. Drumming from the city of Arusha and vocal recitations are interspersed – but often overshadowed – by dense spiritual jazz meanderings. The musicianship is accomplished and its initial impression is magisterial. 'Awake in the Rain' is a real highlight while 'Ngorongoto' is triumphant. But there's a nagging feeling that Kutiman is capitalising upon, rather than working with, the artistry from this region.

Akin to white European DJs sampling ritualistic practice to add 'delight and intrigue' to their otherwise benign tech house odysseys, *Wachaga* employs the region it is named after as mere source material, rather than a vital fulcrum for experimentation.

ALEX DE LACEY

TRACK TO TRY *Awake in the Rain*

## Liga Latina Liga Latina

Multination (42 mins)



Super album from a supergroup



Liga Latina have been described as 'a European supergroup.' Well, they're a quintet of Scandinavian

musicians steeped in Latin and Caribbean musical traditions and, on this evidence, they are rather super. They play a blend of traditional Cuban son and jazz, somewhat in the style of the Cuban group Asere when Billy Cobham hitched his mighty drum kit to them over a decade ago.

The line-up is essentially one of tres or Spanish guitar, piano, double bass, percussion and trumpet – often muted and in keeping with the band's refined, even understated take on the music. All five have pedigree – one of pianist Theo Hjorth's teachers was César Pedrosa of Los Van Van – and a few select guests add some worthwhile extras. Violinist Lasse Høj Jakobsen, for example, contributes to a palpable Mexican feel on the traditional 'Toro Mata'. There's a splendid version of Guillermo Portabales' evergreen 'El Carretero' and Eusebio Delfin's 'Y Tu Que Has Hecho' sounds remarkably like BVSC. Most of the songs, however, are originals contributed by singer and guitarist, Mike Hecchi. If occasionally those vocals sound slightly forced, the real emphasis on this cultured and distinguished album is more on the band's instrumental dexterity.

MARK SAMPSON

TRACK TO TRY *El Sabor*

## Lokkhi Terra Cubangla

Funkiwala Records (46 mins)



London fusionistas return to their Cuban-Bangla roots



Acclaimed groovesters Lokkhi Terra continue their creative roll, returning to their Bangla-Afro-Latin

jazz roots after a wildly successful collaboration with Afrobeat keyboardist Dele Sosimi. Featuring a who's who of London-based players from, variously, Bangladesh, Brazil, Cuba, Spain and Nepal, *Cubangla* offers more sparkling genre crossing. Its eight tracks veer from fresh takes on traditional Bengali folk tunes to unlikely but sophisticated pairings including Baul blues, Sufi samba and Cubangla funk. Keys player and main man Kishon Khan – here on piano, Fender Rhodes, microKORG and (on roots-reggae remake 'Bhandari Revisited') wah-wah harmonium – has written and/or arranged a clutch of tunes that respect tradition while forging new pathways. 'Badaam' jumps off the Cuban standard 'El Manisero' into a sung conversation between Cuban *sonero* Javier Camilo and Bangladeshi songbirds Sohini Alam and Aanon Siddiqua.

The album's title-track is a glorious *descarga* jam riffing on themes Cuban and Bengali, stoked by piano, percussion, trumpet and Jalal Ahmed's snaking *bansuri* (flute). An upbeat variation on a legendary Sufi song, 'Lal Mere' finds Alam and Siddiqua in powerful form and Khan deploying a fiery Rhodes solo. Originally performed at a *Songlines Encounters Festival*, 'Kon Kole Revisited' features the rough-hewn voice of the late Baul musician Rob Fakir, his lyrics celebrating Bengali philosopher Lalon and his attitude of religious tolerance. Deep, laced with joy and a masterly lightness of touch, *Cubangla* rewards repeated listening.

JANE CORNWELL

TRACK TO TRY *Lal Mere*

## Douglas MacGregor Songs of Loss and Healing

Douglas MacGregor (44 mins)



A moving and honest musical journey through delayed grief



This is the third solo album by accomplished London-based classical guitarist Douglas