

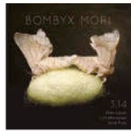
Fusion REVIEWS

3,14 Bombyx Mori

Worlds Within Worlds (76 mins)



Playing that is as smooth as silk from master instrumentalists



This is an extremely elegant and accomplished record. But that should come as no surprise as it

features three extremely skilled musicians: Efrén López on plucked strings, Ciro Montanari on Indian *sarod* and Jordi Prats on *tabla*. Having all been involved in Ross Daly's Labyrinth project, they are passionate about the modal instruments of Asia and the Mediterranean and here create ten new compositions for them.

The inspiration is silk and the Silk Road. It begins with 'The Secret', a speedily paced 11-minute piece introducing the three musicians. How silk was produced was kept a secret by the Chinese. 'Prism' is a moment of calm, and then things get more exciting with '3,000 Feet' – the length of thread from a single silkworm – with dramatic *sarod* writing and more variety of speeds and textures including vocal percussion. López plays a wide variety of instruments including *oud*, hurdy-gurdy, *Azeri tar*, and *Herati dutar*. The guttural but speedy Afghan *rubab* is distinctive on the title-track and 'A.A.A.A.A.A.' (sic), dedicated to the mulberry from which the *rubab* and silk are made. The band see the Silk Road not so much as a road, 'but as a long unifying thread that binds us together, linking lives around the world.' Some of these pieces seem over-extended and a little too polite, but the musicianship and vision is exemplary.

SIMON BROUGHTON

TRACK TO TRY 3,000 Feet

Acid Coco Mucho Gusto

El Palmas Music (40 mins)



Groove-riding cross-genre collisions with Colombian roots



Acid Coco are a Colombian duo whose careers have led them to the US, Europe and beyond. Before the

formation of Acid Coco, the duo played in reggae bands, conquered the European EDM scene and toured with bands like Los Transatlanticos and Banana Sound Cartel. Despite leaving



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Redi Hasa The Stolen Cello

Ponderosa Music Records (48 mins)



Plunderphonics: Albanian exile's purloined strings sing with soul



When Redi Hasa arrived in Italy as a refugee from Albania, the only possession he took with him was his cello, liberated from the conservatoire in Tirana where he had been a student. His virtuosity on the instrument brought him to the attention of the composer Ludovico Einaudi, with whom he has recorded and toured now for several years. On his solo debut he coaxes from his instrument an extraordinary sound, deep and resonant in which he seems to make the cello sing with the soul and passion of a human voice. It surely cannot be long before someone dubs

him 'the Jimi Hendrix of the cello.' Yet his playing is entirely acoustic and without trickery or treatment.

The dozen instrumental compositions draw on Mediterranean folk tradition and conservatoire classicism, sometimes meditative, as on 'The Snow' and 'Butterfly', and at other times playful as on 'Cherry Flowers' and 'Little Street Football Made of Socks'. Collaborators include Turkey's Mercan Dede and Akin Sevgör, the German composer Alva Noto and Hasa's mentor Einaudi. Someone should send a copy to Kronos Quartet so David Harrington can get on the phone to Italy with a commission.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

TRACK TO TRY *The Prayer of the Moon*

Colombia many years ago and exploring countless musical terrains since, the duo have released this album, a nod to the underground (but growing) punk and noise core scenes in Colombia and the explosion of Colombian electronic grooves in the diaspora. While still encompassing many of the more traditional styles of Colombia, *Mucho Gusto* overlays a characterful aesthetic of wonky electronica, with Casio SK-5

keyboards, drum machines, distorted electric guitars all in the mix.

The album was recorded in just two sessions in Geneva, but it doesn't sound that way. The sonic identity of this album is diverse, but very clear. Acid Coco genre-cross – from 'Yo Bailo Sola', a female-empowering *cumbia* about the dismissal of a dance partner so the woman can dance alone, right through to the unmistakably punky 'Sin Salida' or the 90s throwback techno-merengue

of 'Solo Estás Tú' – without losing their emotive yet defiant feel.

CHARLOTTE ALGAR

TRACK TO TRY *Yo Bailo Sola*

Cunning Folk A Casual Invocation

Dharma Records (65 mins)



Folk wizard casts his spell



George Hoyle, aka Cunning Folk, is a folklorist, storyteller, folk artist, magical ritualist, a former

member of Gay Dad, Circulus, and currently bassist with Stick in the Wheel, as well as the guiding force behind the Bermondsey Folk Festival. His new album is a stark contrast to his recent acoustic albums – 2018's *Constant Companion* and 2017's *Ritual Land, Uncommon Ground*. It's more akin to Can or Popol Vuh than it is to conventional acoustic folk, with Hoyle on bass and guitars, joined by the brilliant drummer Sam Kelly and keyboardist Olly Parfitt (both former Circulus members) and Norfolk singer Gemma Khawaja for a powerful, incantatory set that Hoyle describes as 'a magical working.'

It begins with a startling protective spell for Traveller singers, taking us into 'We Are the Harvest', drawing on corn dolly lore, while 'Pan to Artemis' is a heavy, psychedelic, mind-warping setting of one of Aleister Crowley's poems. The title-track is spooky, liminal, synth-haunted, with a magical knot of a bass line, while 'Witches' tells of the Witch of Wapping, Joan Peterson, hanged at Tyburn in 1652. But save the best till last – the 17-minute epic freak-out of 'A Song of Low & High Magic' is there to carry you away. Don't fight it.

TIM CUMMING

TRACK TO TRY *A Song of Low & High Magic*

Jneiro Jarel After a Thousand Years

Far Out Recordings (50 mins)



Contemplative album and celebration of recovery



Two years ago, Brooklyn-born musician producer Jneiro Jarel had virtually completed this album, while he was living in Costa Rica. Then he suffered a stroke. But, with the support of crowd funding, he made it back to

the US for treatment and now his recovery has reached the stage where the album can be released. It turns out to be a meditative celebration of revival, of survival, of being alive. Tracks like 'If I Could See Heaven Without Dying' and 'Ce-Les-Tial' really do feel like what it says on their cans. It's a wall-to-wall instrumental album with a totally uplifting vibe, floating on a sea of gentle electronic bossa and samba rhythms.

The minimalism of the melody lines add to the blissed out meditative feel, never taking the project into the middle of the road. Jarel's work with Thom Yorke and Damon Albarn, and his own Dr Who Dat? records clearly displays his high-end left-field chops, so this outing is a joy with a lovely mellow feel. The spirituality with which he has invested the music is palpable. Cosmopolitan rather than rooted in a local tradition it may be, but it's never ersatz fusion or world music soup. It derives its strengths from Jarel's transcendent vision and his bossa inspiration.

MAX REINHARDT

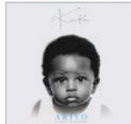
TRACK TO TRY *African Bahia Sol*

Kuku
Ariyo (A Sight to Rejoice)

Music Without Passion is Noise (57 mins)

★★★★★

A heartfelt album dedicated to Nigerian-American's son



The sixth studio album from singer-songwriter Kuku is a 16-track affair, wide-ranging in both musical

and thematic scope and tied up in a bow by way of a dedication to the artist's baby son, Ariyo. Just what the future holds in such precarious times is of concern here, and the Paris-based Nigerian-American enlists guests including singer Shola Adisa-Farrar and keys player Brian Jackson alongside soundbites from black revolutionaries as he considers possibilities. Opener 'Commerce or Conscience' sets out his stall, as a lilting guitar-and-piano intro blends into spoken-word musings by Nina Simone and Fela Kuti about the duty of the artist to reflect the times and Kuku asking, in his warm, commanding baritone, 'What you going to do with all that talent?'

Folksy tunes recalling cotton-picking ('Share Cropper') and sumptuous Yoruba-language lullabies ('Ariyo') are juxtaposed with anthems such as 'Who Taught You', in which a sample



Liraz
Zan

Glitterbeat Records (41 mins)

★★★★★

A funky tribute to the women of Iran



Iranian Jewish artist Liraz is a big star in Israel, where her family have been based since the 1970s, and where performances with her own band and solo slots with the likes of the Andalusian Orchestra of Jerusalem have showcased her melismatic voice and wide-ranging style. Her 2015 Persian-language cover of 'Love Me Like You Do' (from the *Fifty Shades of Grey* soundtrack) was accompanied by a video featuring Liraz in a burka, and it's this subversive streak – more extreme than on her 2018 debut *Naz* (Cute), a work that explored the pop music of Iran, pre-revolution – that Liraz plunders here.

Zan means 'Women' in Persian, and it's the women of contemporary Iran – from child brides to freedom

fighters – to whom she's referring. Utilising contacts gleaned from the Iranian community in Los Angeles, where Liraz worked as an actress, she collaborated with anonymous musicians in Tehran: percussionists, string players, wind instrumentalists, many of them women. Their smuggled recordings vie and blend with sharp electro beats and the sort of swelling, pathos-laden backing beloved of Iranian diva Googoosh, who is clearly a role model. Liraz is at her best when investing passion, urgency and a sense of danger into tracks including opener 'Zan Bezan' (Women, Sing) and the fabulous 'Injah', though the disco-tastic 'Joon Joon' is a joy and 'Shab Gerye', a ballad, soothes and stirs. Liraz, then: a name to drop.

JANE CORNWELL

TRACK TO TRY *Zan Bezan*

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of Malcolm X's legendary black power-filled 1962 speech moves into a sort of upbeat freedom dance (in a remixed track, the speech is sung with added lyrics), and the gravitas-laced, highlife-flecked 'Silence', with its sonorous harmonies and barbed multilingual lyrics. The duet 'What a World' is a lament for the ages; the harmonica-fuelled 'Aziyadé' a gorgeous love ballad; a cover of 'Knockin' on Heaven's Door', with deft Yoruba-language passages, is pitch perfect, heartfelt. An album as multifaceted, then, as Kuku is multi-octave: variously a paean to the ancestors, a road map for the child, a caution against complacency, and a tonic for the soul.

JANE CORNWELL

TRACK TO TRY *Silence*

Ligeti Quartet
Songbooks Vol 1

Nonclassical (55 mins)

★★★★★

String quartet try their hands at throat singing... sort of



The Ligeti Quartet perform a series of pieces by British composer Christian Mason, inspired by two very different

traditions of overtone singing: namely Tuva and Sardinia. The singing of overtones involves implementing advanced vocal techniques by which the cavities of the mouth and throat are capable of producing whistling melodies, guttural drones and other dazzling displays of a capella artistry. Mason's insight into these traditions, as well as his deep knowledge of Western classical string techniques, has given rise to a remarkable exploration of these sounds in string quartet form.

Doing more than merely transcribing existing repertoire from within the two traditions, the ten pieces mimic vocal overtones by employing certain extended string techniques that could be said to be their string equivalents. So-called 'artificial harmonics' are used to represent the high Tuvan melodies, while playing *sul ponticello* (near the bridge) extends the normal tonal range of the instruments. These auxiliary string sounds bring to mind the work of other contemporary composers such as Arvo Pärt and Ernst Reijseger, but the quartet's virtuosic interpretations of Mason's experiments are quite unique and worth a listen for classical aficionados and connoisseurs of overtone singing alike.

TOM NEWELL

TRACK TO TRY *Eki Attar* ▶