

Fusion REVIEWS

Anavantou! Brincantes

Cypress Open (45 mins)

★★★★★

A whirlwind of Brazilian styles with a Balkan dash of ska



I often feel weary when faced with collaborations between Europeans and Brazilians when the accordion-led rhythm of *forró* is mentioned, as the result is often an hour of non-stop accordion gesticulating. This is the case on opening track 'Chapéu do Maori' here, where a hyperactive accordion leads the band on a Balkan-esque groove. Thankfully, a deft bass line and strangely pleasing synth squeaks mark it out as a *forró* fusion of note. Better yet, the tracks that follow it take the group – who comprise five Belgians and four Brazilians – deeper into Brazil, through north-eastern rhythms such as *coco* and *maracatu* to Afro-Brazilian *capoeira* and *umbanda* chants, as well as dipping into ska, swing and plenty of Balkan tangents.

The result is a multicultural celebration of rhythm and song that reveals a transatlantic group of musicians who clearly enjoy exploring each other's musics. Whether giving ska a funhouse makeover on 'Kassket Ska' or marrying indigenous flutes with ominous electronica on 'Vitos Beat', the overarching feel is of a cross between Afro Celt Sound System's multi-layered worldbeat and the diasporic pop Gilberto Gil was making in the 80s.

RUSS SLATER

TRACK TO TRY *Gens Qui Dorment*

Bei Bei & Shawn Lee Year of the Funky

Legere Recordings (45 mins)

★★★★★

Chinese zither prodigy teams up with super-producer



The talented young *guzheng* player Bei Bei has teamed up, for her sophomore effort, with a very experienced producer and multi-instrumentalist, Shawn Lee. Bei Bei began playing *guzheng* (Chinese zither) at the age of seven and was trained to a professional level at the Central University of Nationalities in Beijing and the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. She also studied jazz and improvisation at Fullerton College, California, which led to collaborations with funk, jazz,

electronica, hip-hop and dance artists. Lee is a London-based American who has worked as a musician, producer, singer-songwriter, composer and radio DJ with a wide range of artists, in fields including popular music, advertising and film and TV soundtracks.

It is tempting to say this album has nothing to commend it. But that would be unfair; suffice to say that the *guzheng* sounds more clunky than funky. Is it *bad* enough to be good? Most certainly. One might very much enjoy a little 'Love in Hong Kong', a languid stroll by the 'Purple River' followed by a cheesy, greasy 'Bossa Rossa'. Go ahead, give in to temptation, and be mildly, or perhaps quite wildly, amused. This is very light entertainment, after all.

JON LUSK

TRACK TO TRY *Bossa Rossa*

Moreira Chonguica & Manu Dibango M&M

Marestar Entertainment (62 mins)

★★★★★

Two titans of African jazz sax



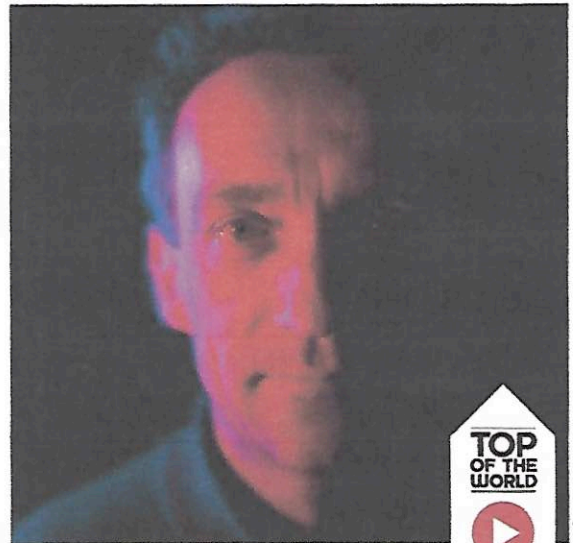
Old saxophonists never fade away, they just keep on blowing. It may not quite be up to Manu Dibango's 'Big Blow' of the 1970s, but there's nothing wrong with the octogenarian's chops. If he plays more vibes than normal, it reflects the laid-back ambience of this collaboration with his friend, the respected Mozambican saxophonist Moreira Chonguica.

Recorded in Paris and arranged by the Cameroonian elder statesman, *M&M* starts with the sound of laughter as the two saxophonists trade licks on 'Blues for Africa'. Then the polished five-piece band enter for a set mainly of African 're-readings' of such American jazz standards as 'Take Five', 'Night and Day', 'In a Sentimental Mood' and, surprisingly, Marcus Miller's 'Tutu'. There's room, too, for Mozambican composer Fany Pfumo's delightful 'Unga Hlupheki Nkata', a great take on Isaac Nkosi's 'Nonto Sangoma' and yet another reinterpretation of Manu's classic 'Soul Makossa' – but a worthwhile one.

Dibango suggests that they were seeking 'an atmosphere of peace and serenity where only music is the master'. The pair have succeeded admirably. Harking back to the effortless feel of 1994's *Afrjazzy*, this is a sheer delight.

MARK SAMPSON

TRACK TO TRY *Nonto Sangoma*



TOP OF THE WORLD



BUY NOW

Justin Adams feat Anneli Drecker Ribbons

Wayward (48 mins)

★★★★★

Serial collaborator unveils his new paintings in sound



From his solo debut with 2001's *Desert Road* through to his production work with Tinariwen, collaborations with Robert Plant and Lo'Jo and his fine series of albums with Gambian *griot* Juldeh Camara, there's not much on Justin Adams' well-travelled CV that hasn't earned the *Songlines* stamp of approval. Inspired by the work of visual artists such as Joan Miró and Jackson Pollock, *Ribbons* is an endlessly captivating set of 'sound paintings' that eschew conventional rock dynamics in favour of slowly shifting abstract patterns in which Adams' fligree guitar is filtered

through a prism of loping Tinariwen grooves, Steve Reich pulses, Gnawa trance rhythms and droning *raga* loops. Anneli Drecker, whom Adams met more than 20 years ago when they were both part of Jah Wobble's *Invaders of the Heart*, is best known as the singer with Norwegian dream-poppers Bel Canto and Röyksopp. Currently researching a PhD on ancient and traditional singing styles at Tromsø's Arctic University, she adds texture to the canvas with wordless vocals that evoke Björk at her most audacious and draw on global influences from Native American chants to Tuvan throat singing. Another pleasingly bold adventure.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

TRACK TO TRY *Wassoulou*

Knoblauch Klezmer Band Knoblauch Scharf

Knoblauch Klezmer Band (75 mins)

★★★★★

A fond klezmer farewell



Like all good funeral parties, the first, and seemingly last, full album from this group can be considered a mourning of death as well as a celebration of a life lived and shared.

After several glorious years of dressing up in animal costumes and recording EPs, The Knoblauchs are signing off their ostentatious career with this recording comprising boisterous beats, meandering arrangements and a flagrant disregard for convention.

The lycra-clad music is built upon a line-up of drums and percussion, upright bass, accordion, clarinet and violin, with all members on vocals. While klezmer draws heavily on Russian and Eastern European