

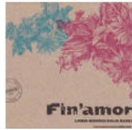
Fusion REVIEWS

Lamia Bedioui & Solis Barki Fin'amor

Lamia Bedioui (55 mins)

★★★★★

Eclectic album weaves together songs from across the globe



In *Fin'amor*, Lamia Bedioui and Solis Barki are conduits for a great many musical styles, traversing both

time and place. To say that the tracklist is eclectic would be something of an understatement. In this fascinating project disparate music is woven together creating a passionate medley of traditional songs, classic compositions and improvisation. Sephardic lullabies, Palestinian wedding songs, classical Egyptian songs, Eskimo melodies, troubadour chants – all and more feature here.

The chemistry between Bedioui's voice and Barki's percussion is central to this record. Bedioui, who was born in Tunis, is certainly a versatile vocalist. She easily manages radical shifts between styles and gives every song the same heartfelt earnestness. Barki is a skilled accompanist and multi-instrumentalist, playing didgeridoo, frame drum, glockenspiel and *udu* (jug drum from Nigeria) to name just a few. Originally released in 2006, *Fin'amor* has been completely re-recorded for this 2019 release. Perhaps this album's Achilles' heel lies in overthinking. While there are many beautiful moments on the album, the concepts underpinning *Fin'amor* are too complex and elusive to give it meaningful depth as a whole.

SHUKRI HABIB ALI

TRACK TO TRY *Desert*

Jane Burnett & Maqueque On Firm Ground/ Tierra Firme

Linus (52 mins)

★★★★★

Canadian Afro-Cuban collective find their feet with third album



Jane Burnett is the pioneering Canadian saxophonist, flautist, bandleader and educator

whose work with Afro-Cuban jazz remains deft, groundbreaking and proudly, freely feminist. After setting out her stall in the early 2000s with the Grammy-nominated likes of *Alma de Santiago* and her calling-card, *Cuban*



Lamia Bedioui & Solis Barki

Odyssey – works of imaginative daring and in-depth understanding – she formed the all-female, similarly Grammy-nominated Maqueque five years ago, famously recruiting the young Cuban singer Daymé Arocena – whose star proceeded to rise. Maqueque have been honed and boosted by constant touring and consistent accolades.

This superb third album welcomes new members including the Ohio-born Nikki D Brown, whose gospel-style vocals and steel-guitar stylings take tracks such as 'On Firm Ground' even deeper, and pianist Dánae Olanó, whose compositional nous is evident on her three originals. Burnett's three compositions, particularly 'Monkey See, Monkey Do', which features past member and vocalist Melvis Santa, are deceptively delicate and effortlessly complex. Drummer Yissy García keeps the album's engine room stoked, while newcomer Mary Paz – an erstwhile member of Interactivo – lends fiery

percussion. Zimbabwean singer Joanna Majoko connects with the groove; special guest Daymé Arocena gifts the self-penned 'Mystery of Jane's House', scatting and singing with big-hearted, life-affirming joy.

JANE CORNWELL

TRACK TO TRY *Monkey See, Monkey Do*

Compro Oro Suburban Exotica

Suban Records (43 mins)

★★★★★

Belgians use a wide sound palette for 'psychedelic' road trip



Suburban Exotica is the new album from the 'Belgian-new-wave' jazz collective Compro Oro. The

group display a myriad of influences from a wide palette of musicians, regions and styles. On album opener 'Miami New Wave' they blend a

mixture of synths and electronics à la LCD Soundsystem with Touareg-esque guitars in the vein of Bombino.

'Mogadishu' creates a dubbed-out atmosphere with processed electronics and percussion, with a nod to Mulatu Astatke provided by vibes and marimba. 'Lalibela' takes its triplet propulsion and Malian electric guitar stylings from Songhoy Blues with added synths and tuned percussion.

Presenting themselves as 'a psychedelic underground road trip to Africa, the Middle East and the Americas via Belgium' is at the expense of the artists and styles they draw from. Their press release states they are 'deep into several ethnic music traditions' with 'dark grooves' and 'exotic rhythms.' The 'exoticism' portrayed in the press release, album name and the music lead to the question: what exactly are they attempting to portray? Not only do the different styles create a convoluted aesthetic, but they also compromise on the chance to create something truly unique and original.

MAREK TYMKÓLU

TRACK TO TRY *Kruivtat*

Dawn Drake & ZapOte Nightshade

Dawn Drake (41 mins)

★★★★★

A darker trip into Afro-Cuban and Afrobeat grooves



Named after the sweet, pink avocado-like Caribbean fruit that grows in Dominican

Republic, Cuba and Mexico, this excellent band of mostly female players deploy a sound that's been described as world-beat-meets-funk – or what their frontwoman, Brooklyn multi-instrumentalist Dawn Drake likes to call 'chronic grooves from the global south.' Drake is a percussionist who specialises in *batá* (double-headed drum used in Yoruba-centred ceremonies) and a bassist variously drawn to the skittering rhythms of Afrobeat, the fiery groove of Afro-Cuban jazz and the lilting languor of samba. She has previously released two upbeat albums whose songs celebrated everything from love and universal consciousness to women's empowerment and respect for the environment.

This time around, however, things are darker, ambient and to this listener, more intriguing, with opening track (and first single) 'Oya de

Zarija' – an electronic interpretation of an invocation to Oya, Yoruba deity of the wind and storms and gatekeeper of cemeteries – mesmerising with a swirling, airy otherworldliness suited to left-field chill-out spaces as well as tradi-modern rituals. Light out of darkness is a theme throughout, with songs featuring *orishas* and goddesses related to seasons and cycles; the track 'Puriya Makuta', a gorgeous take on a North Indian *raga*, could almost bring the sun out. There's fun to be had, too, especially on the bass-and-brass-fuelled 'Salon du Coiffure', while 'Judgment Rumba' is deployed with tongue-firmly-in-cheek. Fab.

JANE CORNWELL

TRACK TO TRY *Oya de Zarija*

Fat Freddy's Drop
Special Edition Part 1

The Drop (35 mins)

★★★★★

Nothing unexpected, but a strong album as always



Since forming in the 1990s, New Zealand soul-dub-electronic outfit Fat Freddy's Drop have steadily built a deserved reputation as one of the Pacific's – and indeed the world's – best live acts. Their reliable combination of mixmaster Chris 'Mu' Faiumu's sonic technology, Maori singer Dallas Tamaira's impassioned vocals and a killer horn section has always guaranteed a pulsing good time.

The band's fifth studio album follows the tried-and-tested Fat Freddy formula, with its six tracks showcasing equal parts of funky feel-good grooves and reggae-inflected rhythms, blended with alternating laid-back and revved-up dance-floor romps. The title-track is a bouncy, brass and rap-driven tune that also features the band's toaster, DJ Slave. The latest single, 'Kamo Kamo', and 'OneFourteen' are both easy-going skanks, while 'Raleigh Twenty' and 'Trickle Down' are strong, club-friendly excursions fuelled by Faiumu's (aka DJ Fitchie) latest video game-sounding effects and his usual phat bass'n'beats electronics.

As with most Fat Freddy studio recordings, the real test for these new tunes will take place in the live concert setting, and while there aren't any major new directions explored here, the group's legion of fans will no doubt be more than satisfied with this latest instalment of Freddy-ism.

SETH JORDAN

TRACK TO TRY *Special Edition*



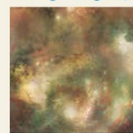
Like Giants TV

Guy Buttery & Kanada Narahari
Nādi

Guy Buttery (57 mins)

★★★★★

String magic from the Indian/South African duo



Over a series of impressive solo albums, the guitarist Guy Buttery has established himself as a major force in South African music. Recorded in his home town of Durban, *Nādi* is his first joint album and he could not have found a more empathetic collaborator than the *sitar*-player Kanada Narahari. They met in 2016 when Buttery was seriously ill with debilitating bouts of fatigue. He consulted Narahari, who is also an Ayurvedic doctor, and who healed him not with medicines but by playing him *ragas* on his sitar.

Out of the patient-doctor relationship grew a musical friendship that led to the nine rather wonderful, mostly

instrumental guitar and sitar duets that make up *Nādi*, (which is a Sanskrit word that translates as 'The Channel' or 'An Internal River').

They're joined by *tabla* player Ronan Skillen, bass player Shane Cooper, Chris Letcher on organ and the synths of Julian Redpath, who add layers of New Age ambience to their shimmering African-Indian inflections. Thandi Ntuli also adds a brilliantly improvised vocal to 'Sonokota'. Yet in many ways, the best moments come on the two-part 'Raag Kirwani' when the sound is stripped down to the simple, stringed magic of the two main protagonists.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

TRACK TO TRY *Raag Kirwani – Gat in Teentaal*

TOP OF THE WORLD

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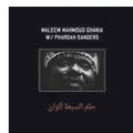
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Maleem Mahmoud Ghania with Pharoah Sanders
The Trance of Seven Colors

Zehra (71 mins) VINYL & DIGITAL ONLY

★★★★★

These colours don't blend well



The mystical Sufi music of the Moroccan Gnawa people has long been a source of fascination for jazz musicians attracted by the intense sounds of the *gimbri* and *qaraqab* (metal castanets) and the bluesy cries of the singers. Collaborations were always going to be inevitable.

This reissue of their 1994 album sees avant-garde jazz saxophonist Pharoah Sanders jamming with legendary

Gnawa master Mahmoud Ghania, overseen by producer Bill Laswell. For a meeting of three indisputable leaders in their fields, I came to this album expecting to be blown away, but instead I feel like I've been left hanging. Each element is wonderful in its own right: the sound of Ghania and his ensemble is powerful and intoxicating, and Sanders explores the boundaries of saxophone technique. Together, though, it feels as if there is little connection. The styles sit on top of each other without really blending. They don't clash, but they don't particularly complement each other either.

The most effective collaboration on the album is actually on the track 'Hamdouchi', where Sanders plays with Aissawa musicians led by Abdelkabar Addabachi. Here, Sanders'

wailing sax integrates with five-piece shawm-and-drum ensemble in the way that it doesn't with the Gnawa musicians, giving a possible glimpse into what could have been.

JIM HICKSON

TRACK TO TRY *Hamdouchi*

Jewish Monkeys
Catastrophic Life

Greedy for Best Music (33 mins)

★★★★★

Klezmer rock band that know how to monkey around



"The Marx Brothers on acid; the nightmare of Benjamin Netanyahu; freaks; millionaires on a mission impossible; a great story," ▶