



The Souljazz Orchestra Under Burning Skies

Strut (46 mins)

★★★★★

Ottawan Afrobeaters discover the joys of disco



Breaking news: Souljazz Orchestra have discovered the synthesizer. But not in a bad way. After 15 years together, frequent tours, several nominations for awards and now eight albums, one might wonder whether certain signature clichés would creep in. Not a bit of it. Without dissipating their tell-tale big brassy sound, the sextet from Ottawa have added an 80s rare groove and an electro/Afro-disco feel (with hints of Osibisa, Orlando Julius and the maverick William Onyeabor) to the customary earthy Afrobeat and French Caribbean influences. The sound of the Antilles is still very pronounced on 'Oublier Pour un Jour' and

the lovely 'Tambour à Deux Peaux'. The re-working of the Somali Dur-Dur Band's 'Is Yeelyel' is done with trademark gusto, but it's the delicious underlying bass, guitar and synth groove, as heard on the infectious opener, 'Dog Eat Dog', on 'Lufunki' and on the instrumental title-track, that is such a pleasant surprise here.

Baritone saxophonist Ray Murray suggests that they are not just a band but 'a way of life.' Arguably their best yet, this is an album that positively burns with passion, enthusiasm and a supreme confidence in the collective.

MARK SAMPSON

TRACK TO TRY *Dog Eat Dog*

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Koral Society Waters Wide

Heartwear Ltd (32 mins)

★★★★★

The griot, the jazz bassist and the former indie-pop singer



Somewhat of a supergroup, Koral Society comprises Caroline Trettine on guitar and lead vocals, Mosi Conde on kora and Alison Rayner on bass. A former singer with the alternative rock group The Blue Aeroplanes,

Trettine achieved cult success in the 90s with her album *Be a Devil* on Billy Bragg's Utility label. Conde is a hereditary griot musician from West Africa and performs solo as well as with his band Kaira Kora Afrika; his world-class kora playing has met the ears of the great and good, including Bill Clinton and Nelson Mandela. The third member of the group, Rayner, has worked with jazz greats such as Tal Farlow and Jean Toussaint.

Together on this album, the three musicians create a sound-world that soothes and speaks directly: Trettine's

breathy voice is carried along by sonorous bass, rippling kora and her own steely guitar. Sparse percussion can be heard on a couple of tracks here and, varying the timbre slightly, Alison Rayner and Mosi Conde (in French and Mandinka) occasionally join Caroline Trettine on vocals. While there is nothing particularly adventurous on this record and the tone remains soft throughout, *Waters Wide* is a nice collection of songs with some lovely accompaniment.

TOM NEWELL

TRACK TO TRY *Rainbow*

Tomáš Liška Invisible Faces

Animal Music (48 mins)

★★★★★

Eastern European flavours with a Parisian jazz air



Bringing together musicians from Turkey, Serbia and the Czech Republic, bassist Tomáš Liška here draws upon a shared musical language to present a rich palette of emotional hues. The group's sound is sometimes

reminiscent of a Parisian café band, thanks largely to the instrumentation of accordion, violin and bass. Drums and electric guitar add textures making the music less folksy and, while mainly instrumental, the album contains a little singing that breaks it up nicely.

Apart from a beautifully rendered Turkish folk song, all the tunes are Liška's and display a jazz-like approach to composition. Nikola Zarić's accordion is a wonderfully effective accompaniment instrument and bears most of the responsibility for harmony while occasionally taking flight with a virtuosic solo. Much of the melody is taken by Efe Turumtay on violin and betrays influences of classical, Balkan and other music from further east, while David Dorůžka's guitar solo in 'Kalimba' even reminds one of the playing of Ali Farka Touré. This really is an album from many places, but its diversity never feels forced and, instead, is woven carefully into the fabric of the music.

TOM NEUELL

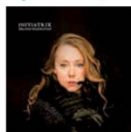
TRACK TO TRY *Waiting for the Moment*

Heloise Pilkington Initiatix

Ripe Cherry Records (56 mins)

★★★★★

A descent into a distinctly New Age kind of underworld



Heloise Pilkington's Halloween-released *Initiatix* is an original and thoughtfully constructed piece of

work. A collection of original songs and chants set to vivid soundscapes, it is intended to evoke 'the archetypal journey of descent into the Underworld in Goddess mythology.' Her voice is undeniably beautiful: clear, supple and with intonation and technique perhaps honed via her extensive experience in singing medieval madrigals. The uncomplicated arrangements are pleasing, making the most of the naked voice and a diverse array of string and wind instruments, from harp to singing bowls. What will either engage or alienate a listener is the lyrical content. Featuring both sung lyrics as well as spoken word, the album explores spiritual themes – invoking the elements, divine beings, and cosmic imagery that could either make your toes curl or send you on a deep meditative journey. Not my cup of tea, but a heady brew that fans of the genre will appreciate.

JAHNAVI HARRISON

TRACK TO TRY *Star Mother*

Juhani Silvola Imaginary Archives Vol 1: Ritual Music from Nameless Civilisations

Eighth Nerve Audio (34 mins)

★★★★★

Challenging music from Sweden with a tough work ethic



Swedish innovator Juhani Silvola is set to release another three albums on his Eighth Nerve label after this – one focusing on acoustic improvisation, another tackling sonatas by Couperin and Bach, and a fourth recording Swedish noise music. Needless to say, Silvola is not too keen on genre boundaries and this is a mercurial and unique album.

Things get beautiful on 'The Feast of the Forking Paths', with a sturdy thumbed bass from the low guitar string, reminiscent of John Fahey or Robbie Basho. The tune also subtly channels Eastern beats and a cowboy melody, while remaining faithful to a strong sense of progression. It's a bit of a shame that, elsewhere, the music seems a little too disparate: the jarring 'Rhythms of the Spheres' comes out like a cross between road-works and an alarm clock; 'The Doctrine of Cycles' is admirable in its achievement of making an acoustic guitar sound like an alien instrument, but it's difficult to listen to. That said, the beauty on display outweighs the negative points. The two meditations are gorgeous in their restraint and elegance, and opener 'Prayer to the World-Eater' certainly catches the ear and intrigues. An impressive beginning then, in many ways, but a determinedly challenging one.

GLENN KIMPTON

TRACK TO TRY *The Feast of the Forking Paths*

World Peace Trio World Peace Trio

MoonJune Records (59 mins)

★★★★★

Three masterful musicians grab a peace of the action



World Peace Trio sees Dwiki Dharmawan, Gilad Atzmon and Kamal Musallam come together to create eight tracks of pure fusion. Drawing together influences that travel from Indonesia to the Middle East via the UK, this is a full-bodied album, which offers a new take on jazz.

Throughout the album, the *oud* is combined with saxophones, clarinets, electronics and the occasional vocals (among other instruments) to create an ambient and meditative album that, while full of depth, sometimes lacks flow. The track 'Morning Mist' opens with an evocative and textured layering of sounds that eases the listener in, but then the heavier-handed arrival of percussion disturbs this peace. As intentional as this may be, it does make moments of this album hard to listen to. The strongest track on the album is the upbeat and energetic 'Ghaza Mon Amour', which brings Middle Eastern influences to the fore and is imbued with an atmospheric tone of romance that other tracks lack.

TUTUKU BARBAROS

TRACK TO TRY *Ghaza Mon Amour*

Zazou/Bikaye/CY1 Noir et Blanc

Crammed Discs (46 mins)

★★★★★

Way ahead of its time; Afro-electronica from 1983



Recorded in 1983 by the composer Hector Zazou in collaboration with French synth experimentalists Guillaume Loizillon and Claude Micheli (aka CY1) and the Congolese singer Bony Bikaye, the ground-breaking Afro-electronic fusion of *Noir et Blanc* is a prime example of why a group of music industry professionals felt the need to invent a new genre term to describe music that fitted nowhere in the standard record-store classifications of the time. They came up, of course, with 'world music' and this is a hybrid landmark in its genesis: in which Fela's Afrobeat tropes and the polyrhythms of the Burundi drummers meet Kraftwerk and the electro-punk of DAF. The only recording from the era remotely like it is possibly Brian Eno and David Byrne's *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*. What's astonishing is that, more than three decades on, the minimalist beats, mutant electronica and global textures sound so totally of our time that these recordings would not seem out of place if dropped into a modern DJ set. Indeed, you might reasonably think it was a smart, genre-bending mash-up of Congotronics, Steve Reich and TV on the Radio made by a bunch of 2017 hipsters who had climbed aboard Damon Albarn's Africa Express.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

TRACK TO TRY *M'Pasil Ya M'Pamba*

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"magnetic high-pitched vocals, hypnotic electronic beats and the fabulous guitar lines of Khalil M. Touré."
- WorldMusicCentral.org



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