

www.fremeaux.com, distributed in the UK by Discovery: www.discovery-records.com

Accordéon Mélancolique might be said to represent where this music went next, though the two Dutch players here – Cherie De Boer and Jean-Pierre Guiran – are firmly back in the piano accordion camp. They are playing their own repertoire, mainly composed by Jean-Pierre, but much of the style derives from musette sources, though other pieces come from traditional, classical and film music. Their technique derives from one instrument providing a lead melody and harmony whilst the other provides some pretty sophisticated and enhancing rhythmic accompaniments. This is pleasant, happy music in the main, not particularly challenging on the one hand, but never boring on the other.

www.acmel.nl

Vic Smith

SELSØLÅTER

Låter Fra Selsø Go Danish Folk Music GO0408

Selsø is a rural area west of Copenhagen and the home and inspiration for this new six-piece band (although only five apparently showed up for pictures). The music all comes from the pen of leader Svend-Erik Pedersen, who plays violin – part of a three-fiddle attack, adapting JPP tactics to Danish music – mandolin and banjo. The tunes themselves cover the dance gamut – polskas, reels, rheinlanders waltzes and so on – but stripped to the core, no more than two parts which are just hammed away. In a way, that core and the insistent manner of playing with electric guitar, bass and drums under the fiddles, give an almost punk-like intensity to the driving sound. There's nothing virtuosic about it, and that's the point: it's very much a communal folk-rock effort, and quite distinct from the nearest competitor, Serras.

For all that, they're original compositions, the melodies feel old, but punched at with plenty of panache and spirit. It works well on disc – although not for repeated listenings – but it's probably the kind of thing that would go down an absolute treat live.

www.gofolk.dk; www.folkshop.dk

Chris Nickson

OREKA TX

Nömadak TX World Village 468085

KEPA JUNKERA

Etxea Warner Spain 51865 0485 2

Oreka TX – Harkaitz Martinez and Igor Otxoa – is Euskadi's leading duo on the *txalaparta*, a game-



like percussion encounter between two people that in its much invigorated present-day form is often dazzlingly intricate. Generally players use tuned planks but the principle can extend to other hittable materials. The pair made what sounds like an interesting journey and documentary film in which they performed, and collaborated with local musicians, in Norway, Mongolia, India and the Sahara, using *txalapartas* of wood, stone, ice, air-tubes, even cardboard. The vocalists are Berber, Indian, Mongolian and Euskal; this is probably the last recording by the famous late Euskal singer-poet Mikel Laboa. Among the percussionists is Norway's 'ice-man' Terje Isungset, and some of the other instrumentalists on the CD are from the various cultures, on *morin-khuur*, jew's-harp, *gottuvadhyam* and sitar, but the majority are Euskal musicians presumably added in the studio back

home. The album isn't a soundtrack, but constructed in the studio using some of the recordings made on the trip, and though the foreign contributors were mostly recorded in the field it's a very clean, programmed sampling-sounding affair with – as often with percussionist-composed albums – rather rudimentary melodic composition. It smells more of the studio than the sense of place, contrasting cultures and adventure that one supposes is better conveyed in the film.

www.worldvillagemusic.com, via Harmonia Mundi: www.harmoniamundi.com

For ten years Oreka TX were members of Kepa Junkera's band, but they're not involved in his latest recording project, *Etxea* (Home). For this he plays some touches of *txalaparta* himself, as well as his first instrument, *trikitixa* (melodeon), but it isn't an instrumental showcase, indeed he doesn't play at all on some tracks. It's devoted to traditional Euskal songs sung, in Euskara, by a collection of many of Spain and Portugal's best known roots vocalists. They include Estrella Morente, Dulce Pontes, Mafalda Arnauth, Uxia, Teresa Salgueiro, Lluís Llach, Lidia Pujol, Ana Belén, Tito Paris, Eliseo Parra, Maria Del Mar Bonet, Vitorino, Manuel Luna, Amancio Prada, Guadi Galego and 27 more, plus 15 instrumentalists. Because of the overall Euskal nature of the material, whose distinctive character, variously soft and flowing or jauntily jolly, has little or no Arabic influence, the result is less exotic-sounding than much Iberian song, and individual styles are to some extent subsumed, with the singers not using their accustomed language or melodic structures. To work out who's singing often needs a look at the pair of booklets in the double CD package.

It's a plump package, but the arrangements aren't big, massed-guest opuses. They're made using just two or three instruments at a time, without bass or drums, and they don't strongly feature Euskal traditional instruments; one of the most prevalent sounds in the accompaniments is piano. The songs are the thing. Bringing in all these singers from outside gives the songs new perspectives and the project an angle, but essentially, in sound, it's a collection of popular Euskal songs with clearly-stated melodies and uncomplicated arrangements that's likely to be very well received in Euskadi, and hearing them from the mouths of familiar artists could spread some of its song culture into other parts of Iberia and beyond.

www.kepajunkera.com

Andrew Cronshaw

Oreka TX in Mongolia



AUSULÉA

Ausuléa SAM Productions SAM9012

TRIO TRESCA

Umpa Umpa RadiciMusic RMR 120

FORTUN DE SARAU

Ethic Music From Sardistan Tajra TAJ 005

Ausuléa are from the Sannio region near Naples and are led by vocalist and acoustic bass guitar player Fabio Crisci. This 10-piece ensemble draws its influence from the traditional melodies of this area of southern Italy, but the arrangements by guitarist Angelo Cioffi touch upon many other influences, including baroque, jazz, various Italian folk styles and some songs have a particularly strong Arabic influence in the melodic construction, vocal styles and use of the oud. Cioffi's wonderful arrangements are rich and fairly complex, but never detract from the power of the songs and the relatively large size of the ensemble provides plenty of instrumental colours, including guitar, oud, violin, flute and clarinet. There is also contrast in the lead vocal, as it is shared between the earthy tones of Fabio Crisci and the sweeter tones of Elisabetta Landi and Monica Assante. The very beginning of the first track and ending of the last one are archive recordings of unaccompanied folk singers. This both emphasises the link to the Sannio tradition and also highlights the extent to which they have augmented the music with their interpretations.

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www.egeadistribution.co.uk

The subtitle of Trio Tresca's *Umpa Umpa* is *Balli E Canti Tradizionali Dalla Toscana E Dalle Aree Confinanti*, which translates as 'Traditional Dances And Songs From Tuscany And The Adjacent Areas'. This is a precise and accurate description of the contents as the majority of the 19 tracks are dance tunes, interspersed with six songs. The trio have a passion for dance and the primary function of the music comes through with their renditions which contain an animating spark that demands to be danced to. The arrangements are by the three musicians with no extra guests brought in for the studio recording. Stefano Tartaglia plays *piffero* (a type of shawm), flute and clarinet with precise articulation and crisp intonation; Giorgio Castelli provides a bedrock of accordion and Silvio Trotta adds string coloration with contributions on guitar,