



Le Vent du Nord **SYMPHONIQUE (OSQ)**

Les Disques SRC

La réputation du Vent du Nord comme groupe-phare dans le mouvement de renaissance de la musique traditionnelle n'est plus à faire. L'intérêt de ce projet réside

de dans l'accompagnement symphonique, signé par la cinquième roue au carrosse, Tom Myron. Pari réussi. Les cordes et les bois confèrent une trame presque panoramique, cinématographique, portant les mélodies et les chœurs pratiquement aux nues, sans faute de goût. Simple, efficace, capable d'émouvoir, force est de reconnaître qu'après le concerto à Ti-Jean Carignan, ce CD a le potentiel d'entrer dans les annales ainsi que les *wow* d'exclamations des musiciens eux-mêmes (*Les larmes aux yeux*).

The Americas

Le Vent du Nord Symphonique

CBC Records/Le Disques

Full Price (56 mins)

★★★★

Blowing a gale into the concert hall



Le Vent du Nord quickly established themselves as one of Quebec's leading tradition-based music groups, and rightfully so. Their highly skilled, crisp and clean playing plus beautifully blended harmonies have set the bar. They've done this with a repertoire that mixes traditional folk with originals that sound as though they too might have been handed down over the decades. That's why a collaboration with an orchestra might have some eyebrows raised – how would the band's music work in a symphonic setting? The answer lies in this live recording, which works very well. The band – multi-instrumentalists Nicolas Boulerice, Simon Beaudry, Olivier Demers and Réjean Brunet – acts collectively as frontmen, with the orchestra largely in the role of backing band. For the most part, the arrangements by Tom Myron serve this concept well, with nice punchy brass that never overpowers, and the classical strings lend a heightened elegance to the folkier timbres of Le Vent du Nord's instruments, which range from violin to *vielle à roue* (hurdy gurdy). When the music is most rhythmically and vocally driven – the high-energy track 'La Filles et Les Dragon', for instance – the two ensembles mesh most closely. On other occasions, the grandeur of sweeping orchestral strings leans towards the syrupy side, as on 'Marguerite'. But fortunately that is the exception, not the rule. And more often than not, when the orchestra's strings make their presence felt it creates a near-cinematic soundscape, as in 'Petite Reve III'. *Symphonique* is a must for any open-minded fan of Quebec music.

Li Robbins

Sultans of String Yalla Yalla!

McKool Recordings

Mid Price (52 mins)

★★★★

All strings lead to Ottawa



Rumba flamenco rhythms may be at the base of this endearing instrumental recording by Toronto-based Sultans of String, but you'll also hear Manouche jazz and Middle Eastern and Cuban influences – the guest musicians, The Cuban Trumpet Ensemble and Cuban-Canadian percussionist, Chendy Leon, having much to do with this. The core of the group is the fine fiddler Chris

Canadian Folk Music award-winners the Sultans of String



McKool, who soars above the tight weave created by guitarists Kevin Laliberté and Eddie Paton, ably supported by strong bass work from Drew Birston. As the group's name suggests, there's a sense of playful whimsy at work, most obviously on tracks like 'Pinball Wizard' (yes, a *rumba*-ised take on The Who) and on a version of Erik Satie's 'Gymnopédies' called 'Gymnorumba'. There's also an ear-catching original called 'Highlander 10 Speed' which goes through all the gears, from high drama to high jinx. But tender moments balance the exuberant tracks, for instance the wistful 'Tikal' or the dreamy 'Sable Island' (inspired by a visit to the island famed for its wild horses). McKool is Ottawa-born and raised, a third-generation Lebanese-Egyptian Canadian who absorbed Arabic folk music right alongside the Western classical music his mother, a piano teacher, played at home – plus with a myriad of other styles in the prevailing culture. In *Sultans of String* it adds up to a sound that's difficult to pin down, but very easy to listen to. *Yalla Yalla!*, previously released in Canada, took the 2009 Canadian Folk Music Award for Instrumental Group of the Year. That's no surprise: it's not a revolutionary sound, but it is undeniably charming.

Li Robbins

Zion Train Dub Revolutionaries

Nascente

Budget price (2 CDs, 119 mins)

★★★★

A 'Best Of' for the 90s reggae rave warriors



Dub music may have originated in the Caribbean but it has mutated over the decades. When the first waves of West Indian immigrants came to the UK in the 1950s, the music crossed into Europe where subsequent generations fused the genre with myriad British influences.

Perhaps no other band represents this new breed of dub than Zion Train, a loose-limbed, multi-cultural collective formed in Oxford at the end of the 80s. A band that can trace its origins to the rise of the rave scene, in which dub chill-out featured alongside higher tempo music, they looked to bridge the boundaries between these two sides of dance culture, fusing house and techno with their dub core.

Dub Revolutionaries is a retrospective of the group's two-decades-plus of musical mash-up. This isn't music for the iPod – you really need a sound system stack with the bass turned up to its fullest. Some of the songs sound hopelessly dated and don't stand up to the test of time – a classic example being 'Dance of Life', the world love-in on the first disc. But there's no doubt these are slices of musical history, as classic cuts such as 'Through The Legs/Scottish Warrior', protesting the Criminal Justice Bill, demonstrate. The second disc, featuring some of the band's more recent work – albeit with some different personnel – moves away from some of the higher tempo work of their early releases to a more roots/dub aesthetic. The standout track is the catchy 'King of the Sounds', with reverb turned up to the max. Crack open a Red Stripe and enjoy.

Ed Stocker

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Chico & Rita

Calle 54 Records

Full Price (63 mins)

★★★★

A Cuban historical re-enactment that really works



The animated feature film *Chico & Rita* was released last year to rave reviews. Directed by Fernando Trueba and Javier Mariscal and set in a sepia-tinted, jazz-loving Havana and New York, it tells the story of a young and ambitious piano player and a beautiful singer with a knockout voice – and all the soaring highs and tormented lows of their relationship. The endearing but simple animation meant the movie was ultimately carried by its soundtrack. Here it is, in all its 30-track glory. At its core are the talents of Cuban pianist, bandleader and composer Bebe Valdés and dulcet-toned Cuban singer Idania Valdés, currently fronting the Orquesta Buena Vista Social Club. A host of soloists interpret the style of the respective 1940s musicians portrayed in the film.

Renowned Philadelphia-born trumpeter and trombonist Mike Mossman plays Dizzy Gillespie, blasting away on the tracks 'Persecución' and 'Vanguard Strings'. Grammy-nominated Buena Vista Amadito Valdés plays Tito Puente, hitting heavy-duty timbales on 'Mambo Herd'. Yaroldi Abreu – an erstwhile member of Chucho 'Son of Bebo' Valdés' band and the Jazz Messengers – plays the great percussionist Chano Pozo. Latin classics such as 'Tin Tin Deo' and 'Paran Pan Pan' nestle smoothly alongside leafs from the American songbook: 'Chico's Dream' features a montage of 'Fascinating Rhythm', 'On the Town' and 'As Time Goes By', all beautifully delivered by the purpose-built Chico & Rita New York Band & Orchestra. Classy, timeless stuff.

Jane Cornwell >>

A scene from the film *Chico & Rita* of the couple performing at the Hotel Nacional

