



Family ties

Traditions go far in this new release

Given that pointless wars and rampant greed result from the male of the species being in control, there is much to be said for elevating the female. This CD contains North Indian songs of praise to Durga, the most revered of the Hindu goddesses, who is credited with nothing less than saving the universe.

The Mallik family has been singing professionally since 1775, and this remarkable dynasty continues with Pandit Premkumar Mallik here singing with his sons Prashant and Nishant, while – as would seem appropriate when praising goddesses – also bringing the gorgeous voice of his 20-year-old daughter Priyanka into the public domain, the first of the

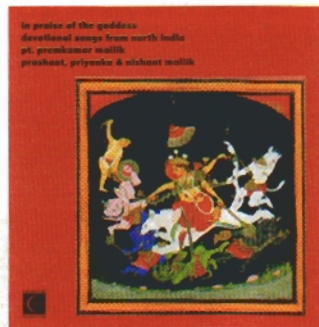
female lineage to be part of this rich heritage. Her work is a miracle of sophistication within the khyal (meaning “thought” or “imagination”) tradition, in which she improvises for 20 minutes with great flexibility and beauty (and extraordinary breath control) on vowels rather than the words of the song.

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Her father and brothers sing together in joyous, selfless interaction, and throughout, the voices are set centre stage with accompaniment just coming from tabla or pakhavaj (Ravishankar Upadhyaya), tanpura and harmonium. For those who only know Indian instrumental music, this has wonderful examples of the ancient singing tradition. **John Shand**

PANDIT PREMKUMAR MALLIK

In Praise of the Goddess
Celestial Harmonies 13267-2

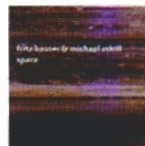


FIONA BOYES

Lucky 13
Yellow Dog YDR1353

Melbourne blues star Fiona Boyes was invited to record this album in America, and, as she already had some chums on the US blues scene, the results sound much more like a band than a session with studio rope-ins. My favourite aspect of Fiona Boyes' work is her gritty guitar playing, which sites the core of her music on the outskirts of a desperate town, somewhere between rural and urban blues. Her tunes stand up, with the exception of a Robert Cray-like stinker called *Stranger in Your Eyes*, while her singing slides in and out of ultimate conviction.

John Shand



FRITZ HAUSER & MICHAEL ASKILL

Space
Celestial Harmonies 13262-2

Silence is the massive, blank, black canvas which Switzerland's Fritz Hauser and Australia's Michael Askill light with the sounds of bells. This album was recorded before dawn on two mornings in a cave at Therme Vals, Switzerland, lending electric resonance to the sudden flashes, flares and booms of sound emanating from a collection of bells intended to be worn by cows, sheep and goats. The music is improvised, and the players often let silence come flooding back in like the tide between strikes. It is sufficiently spooky that those with heart conditions should keep the lights on while listening.

John Shand



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Rhythms del Mundo – Cuba
Ape Vision 1709595

It is always such a pity when rather ordinary music is released to raise money for a good cause. A minimum of \$5 from the sale of each copy of this album will go to Artist Project Earth's Natural Disaster Relief and to climate change awareness programs. So far so good, and pop stars such as U2, Sting, Coldplay and Jack Johnson are keen to help out. However, the problem is that few of these artists have any clue of how to perform Cuban music, which is the album's focus. Fortunately Ibrahim Ferrer and the great Omara Portuondo also look in to lend it all some credibility.

John Shand



VARIOUS ARTISTS

The Best Oriental Album 2006-2007 in the World... Ever!
EMI 0946 372260 2 5

The Best Oriental Album in the World... Ever! Hmmm. Were there a Grammy for the most front, this would win easily. “Oriental” here means middle-eastern, and we're not talking musicologists journeying to a far-flung Bedouin camp to record some octogenarian oud player deemed to be the musical source of the Nile. But just because this music has dance beats scattered across it like cushions in a sheikh's tent it shouldn't be dismissed. Music from every continent now uses dance beats. Fact. This is mostly a good compilation, with some fine songs and playing, and a thick smear of exotic charm.

John Shand