

## ALL OVER THE MAP

## Face the Music

BY STEVE HEILIG

## AFRICA



**Femi Kuti, *The Definitive Collection*** (Wrasse): Two cds of evidence why Femi is one of the very few offspring of a musical legend to carve his own way.

Smart selecting from his own releases, including his scarce first one, plus gatherings from others. The second remix cd nicely includes mostly songs not on the first, including the fantastically deep dubbed version of "Scatta Head," among other niceties.

**Bokoore Beats** (Otrabanda): Here's a treasure, subtitled *Vintage Afro-beat, Afro-rock and electric highlife from Ghana*. From expat John Collins in his Bokoore studios, circa the '70s, and the man had very good taste in recording the likes of Mangwana Stars, T.O. Jazz, and his own Bokoore Band. "Bokoore" means "coolness" and yes, this is that, in the way only classic, guitar-driven, wonderful African dance music can be. If you like that genre at all, check this.

***The Rough Guide to African Blues*** (World Music Network): Many have remarked on the similarity, and traced the roots, of "American" blues and (mostly) West African music such as that exemplified by Ali Farka Toure. So here's a very fine sampler, including Toure, Baaba Maal and Mansour Seck, Rokia Traore and a whole passel of others heretofore unknown to me. A grand tour of the Sahara/Delta connection.

**Occidental Brothers Dance Band International** (Thrill Jockey): This multinational group "plays classic Central and West African dance music—specializing in soukous, highlife, rumba, dry guitar, and other delights from the great continent." OK, do they ever. Featuring a couple of veterans of the revered Ghanaian band the Western Diamonds, including the singer, they play reverent and slightly-stripped variations on Franco and other legends. A gem. Seek their cover of '80s dark disco dance band New Order's "Bizarre Love Triangle" online if you're curious.

**Vieux Farka Toure Remixed: UFOs over JAMAICA**

**The Heptones, *Sweet Talking*** (Heartbeat): The Kings of Studio One when that was really saying something; heck, I'd go with the claim in the liner notes that these guys were "the greatest of all" on that legendary label. I had this lp with its groovy cover shot of the trio lounging in red jackets in a rocky river bed, but this extended ver-

sion has plenty of unreleased and/or extended (try 10 minutes) of the original songs and more. From the first drum drop, a treasure, with the rare schmaltz of a cover like "Only Sixteen" more than outweighed by all the great songs here. "Tripe Girl" alone makes it great but there is much more.

**Roots Man Dub** (Heartbeat): For me, Alvin Ranglin's GG Records will always conjure up fantastic old Gregory Isaacs lps and 7" singles, but Ranglin recorded many more fine artists and here are two cds of dub versions, full of classic riddims and horns with snippets from the likes of George Faith, Bim Sherman (!), the Maytones, Tappa Zukie, Earth and Stone (!) and even Gregory, hailing from the glory years of the '70s into the early '80s. Fine notes, finer dub, yum.

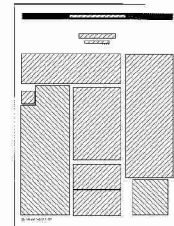
**Junior Murvin, *Inna de Yard*** (Inna de Yard): Yes, he's still got that striking falsetto voice most widely heard on "Police and Thieves," and he sings that and many others on this slightly-unplugged session, the latest in this fine series. Chinna Smith's guitar and yard host, a dog next door barks on "Gipsy (sic) Woman," and the session rolls on rootically like a "Roots Train." It's a short one, only 40 minutes, but worthy and ends with the Bill Withers lament "Ain't No Sunshine" backed mostly by Binghi drums. Beat that!

**The Skatalites, *On the Right Track*** (AIM): In the Beginning was...oh, what can one say. There are a couple of the original legendary players (Knibbs and Sterling) still here, with some almost-originals added on, and some good new blood, and thus that classic Skatalites sound is intact even in Australia, where this was recorded. They sound fantastic, nuff said.

## LATIN/CARIBBEAN

**Erol Josué, *Regelman*** (Mi5): From Haiti, a new star. A *vodou* priest (like both his parents) since the age of 17. Josué conjures electro-vodou, somewhat like the widely-known Boukman Eksperyans sound, but uniquely his. His residencies in Paris and New York have not diluted the Haitian roots but contributed to this striking, moving music. There's not much new these days from this chronically abused nation and this is a treasure.

***The Rough Guide to Salsa, Second Edition*** (World Music Network): This one has a bit more of the unexpected than is usual in this fine series; the true salsa legends (other than Fruko) are found elsewhere and here we get more contemporary (and



sometimes non-Latin) exemplars like Ricardo Lemvo, Kékélé, Bio Ritmo and more (Jimmy Bosch, Cubanason, Alex Wilson) It's great Latin dance music, whatever one calls it.

**Cubanismo!, *Greetings from Havana*** (AIM): Here's the more Cuban-rooted side of things, with this group's latest, a lush, moving, more jazz-inflected offering as a "postcard" from a band which cannot tour the U.S. for the usual idiotic reasons. Nine different Cuban musical styles—*son*, bolero, etc.—all performed with gusto and class under the leadership of trumpeter Jesus Alemany. Many fans will welcome this, even if sent C.O.D.

**Jose Conde y Ola Fresca, *(R)Evolucion*** (Mr. Bongo): Whoever this guy Conde is, he both knows his roots and how to mess with them. Born in the U.S. of Cuban parents, Conde went to Berklee, the Harvard of music colleges, and puts his modern, often humorous twist on Afro-Cuban music, with his own arrangements and all. Legendary Meters funk drummer Zigaboo Modeliste sits in a bit if that's any hint.

**Si, Para Usted: *The Funky Beats of Revolutionary Cuba*** (Waxing Deep): And for more of where that came from, here is a compilation of ultra-rare peak-era Cuban *sabor* from the likes of Los Van Van, Irakere, and a slew of other artists I am not at all ashamed of being ignorant of since they are presented as scarce even to experts. Emphasis on the boogying side, with psychedelia and more added in to this "Communist funk." Karl Marx meets the Summer of Love in Havana.

**The Inspiring New Sounds of Rio de Janeiro** (Verge): Sure, there are "new things" all the time, but some of this *favela*-based music does indeed sound new, being funk/jazz/samba infused but with much dubbed reggae flavor too. Gabriel Moura, partner with Seu Jorge in their first band Farofa Carioca, is likely the most recognized name, but there is also an "apocalyptic Zen prophet and politicized shaman" (what a great job description) here, plus some young rappers right off the streets. I like to give the benefit of the doubt to hip-hop lyrics in another language and assume this is not low-brained gangsta jive; the music is often great and if I'm wrong, don't tell me.

**King Selewa and his Calypsonians, *Calypso Invastino*** (ARC Music): Not much new calypso gets through to my shores or ears these days, so this is welcome—even if it comes from an African-born Caucasian (I think) who gathered his fine band from all over the place. They are tight and the horns sing sweet as Selewa does likewise with smart lyrics and a classic sound. Might as well be Trinidad in your mind.

**Latin Jazz** (Putumayo): A user-friendly walk (dance) through some classics, starting with Machito and stepping through Puente, Sanchez, Barretto, Palmieri, etc., and extra points for includ-

ing Manny Oquendo among these 10 all-star tracks.

## ASIA

**Pandit Pran Nath, *Raga Cycle*** (Sri Monshine): Here is some musical Holy Grail for you: the rare recordings by this legendary vocal master have been rare and expensive. This 1972 Paris concert finds him accompanied by new music pioneers Terry Riley, La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela as he sings through two full devotional ragas, using his "musical science" developed over a lifetime. Hypnotic at a minimum, transporting at best, this revered master is now available to all with ears to hear.

**Nawal, *Aman*** (Nawali.com): Indian Ocean sounds from the Comoros Islands, between Madagascar and Africa, soaked in Sufism in the case of this obviously talented and relatively deep-voiced female singer and musician (she plays the *gambusi*, akin to an *oud*), who leads a trio featuring *mbira* in Middle-Eastern-flavored acoustic songs of charm and power.

**The Rough Guide to the Music of Vietnam** (World Music Network): I have not heard of a single one of the 14 artists featured here—and that's wonderful! And so is much of the music, ranging from very traditional-sounding rural balladry (I think) to modernized danceable workouts (I think). A bit o' blues, rock, and so on, but mostly very Southeast Asian-sounding music with lots of flutes and light strings and wistful-sounding female vocals, until the concluding goofy "Riders in the Sky" cover, which sorta needed to be included but almost ruins the overall effect.

**Healing the Divide** (Anti-): This seems to be a soundtrack to something having to do with the Dalai Lama. He talks, gets translated, the Gyoto Monks Tantric Choir does their low-voiced chant, then Anoushka Shankar provides a beautiful 11-minute ragalike song; Nawang Khechog and American Indian flautist R. Carlos Nakai duet nicely in a meditative manner that seems like maybe they come from the same culture and maybe they did; then Philip Glass and Foday Musa Suso do likewise. The real unexpected comes via the concluding four tracks featuring the Kronos Quartet and even lower-voiced Tom Waits, which really need to be heard to be, well, heard. Woulda been nice to hear him out-tantra the Monks, too.

## WHERE ELSE?

**Nick Drake, *Family Tree*** (Tsunami): Drake is a cult favorite only revered long after his early death in 1974; only three lps out in his lifetime, then one more, and now this collection of long-bootleg lo-fi rarities, some recorded in his bedroom. There's even a Mozart trio with Drake on clarinet! There are at least a few other songs from these "sessions" around but this is as close to complete as it will get for the fanatics.

**Tim Buckley, *My Fleeting House*** (MVD dvd):



Buckley was another of the gifted troubadours who died at 26 or 27 in the '70s. His son Jeff carried his same operatic voice into similar intense songworlds before dying as well two decades later. They both were practically American versions of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, and here are 14 video versions of the father's songs, circa 1967-74, starting with guest spots on *The Monkees* tv show!

**Bob Dylan, *The Golden Years 1962-78*** (Chrome Dreams): Thankfully, not every visionary artiste dies young. This two dvd set covers his life from birth to well, born again. Childhood pals and past musical cohorts get their moment in the reflected glory; some performances, and (too much) reflection by critics who love the sound of their own voices. But again, probably essential for the legions of disciples.

**Billie Holiday *Remixed and Reimagined*** (Legacy): Speaking of legends, maybe they'll all be remixed eventually. Last year's Nina Simone remix was actually pretty cool, against the odds. This one seems less so, but might sound better in a club than my car. Sacrilege? Naah. Silly? Maybe. But anything that might get more new ears to hear *Lady Day* can't be half bad.

**Super Cool California Soul 2** (Ubiquity): So, if you like your soul unrefried and kept real, try 16 slabs of obscure but very cool r&b, funk, soul and such, circa 1966-82, kicking right off with a fine Gow Dow Experience (?) version of "Compared to What," still all too relevant, and flowing on from there like a summer day. It is summer and here's a soundtrack, even if you can't be in California (poor you). ★

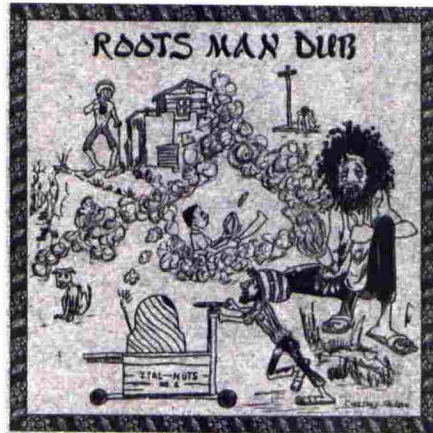
**"Music was originally discreet, seemly, simple, masculine, and of good morals. Have not the moderns rendered it lascivious beyond measure?"**

**—Jacob of Liege, c.1425**

**"Music is another planet" —Alphonse Daudet, 1887**

**These three are not to be trusted: "a singer, a shopkeeper, and an opium eater."**

**—Hindu proverb**



**Bamako** (Modiba): I winced when I first looked at this, but once played, I was OK. The re-versions, by all sorts of djs I've never heard of other than the much-respected Cheb I Sabbah, twist the songs into things Vieux's famed and late lamented father might not recognize, but the son's soul comes through often enough. It's filed in "electronica" but it's still African to me.

