

## MARKKU LEPISTÖ

**Solos** Rapusaari RPU 002

## FRODE HALTLI

**Avant** Fok Hubro LC49093

## JOHANNA JUHOLA

**Shadow Of A Diva** Westpark 87371

Here are three virtuosi of the button accordion – a Finn on diatonic, a Norwegian and a Finn on big chromatics. Kindred spirits but with different approaches to their instruments' tonal and emotional expansion into something far beyond their usual image.

Markku Lepistö is Finland's top guy for three-row diatonic accordion (indeed one of Europe's, and member of Accordeon Samuraj with Kepa, Riccardo Tesi et al). In Solos he moves ever onward with newish compositions, and some older, that really explore the instrument's tonal and rhythmic range, from minimalist puffing to masterfully, fluidly melodious and lyrical. The modestly brilliant Lepistö is far beyond any need to display chops, and in this entirely solo album, with occasional touches of effects, and a guest bit-tern, he brings out pretty much every sound his Beltuna can make, and it's a rich, constantly interesting and complete listen.

markkulepisto.com

Norway's Frode Haltli's extensive and always classy back-catalogue and collaborations range across classical, jazz and Norwegian traditional music. For his latest project, *Avant Folk*, he's assembled a ten-piece band for extremely inventive, open-minded, often wild, visualising treatments of traditional Norwegian songs and tunes, plus a Faroese Kingo hymn and two of his own compositions. The line-up of hardanger fiddle, violin, saxes, trumpet, goat horn, harmonium, electric and acoustic guitars, synths, double bass and drums gives him a rich palette, in which the accordion sits as a member rather than prime soloist. An example: the deep, dark, ominous slow surging of *Gråtar'n*, hugely evocative of the dark forests, is based on, but explores, deconstructs and rebuilds, a waltz from Finnskog ('Finn forest', so-called because the area was settled by Finnish immigrants in the 17th Century). Emerging from it, as a light-filled forest clearing, is an elegant formal tune of Haltli's that evolves in a chunky, slithering, smearing, very Norwegian jazz way that's thousands of miles from US jazz.

hubromusic.com

Finn Johanna Juhola's approach is, as ever, different. The opening electric guitar chords sound like the intro to a big classic-rock number, but what comes in is an accordion tune, though still pretty hefty and widescreen. And like all here (except a childhood memory of a traditional song) it's one of her own, in this case written while waiting in Norwegian snows for roadside assistance. Programming by Tuomas Norvio and Hannu Oskala play a big part in the music of her bands – the Johanna Juhola Trio and Johanna Juhola Reaktori, which together also consist of bassist Sara Puljula, guitarist and mandolinist Roope Aarnio, and Milla Viljamaa on piano and harmonium. The title track is a song, lightly delivered by guest Yona, and there's vocalising or rappy speaking on some tracks too. Her tunes are as quirky and colourful as her costume sense – a Juhola show is as visual as it is aurally striking. There's the lurch of tango, punchy Finnish pelimanni-style harmonium-pumping, calm serenity, big chunks of sound, and the twitchily dancey closing track, *New Adventures In Candyland*, is dedicated to sugar rush.

westparkmusic.de

Andrew Cronshaw

## COMBO NATIONS

**Dunya** Heilo HCD7323

Javid Afsari Rad is a santur player of Iranian origin who has been living in Oslo since the 1980s. In 2000, he had the idea of bringing together a number of roots musicians from various parts of the world that now make their home in that city. In the current line-up he is joined by a violinist with a background in the classical music of North India, a multi-instrumentalist Moroccan who plays mainly the Afghan rabab here, a Senegalese Manding kora jali, two percussionists with West African and Indian backgrounds and a home-grown bassist.

The basic concept is apparently very simple but in practice it is almost certainly much less so. The bassist and percussionists set up steady, rhythmic long grooves which give the stringed instruments and the vocalists among them the opportunity to show their own music either soloing or providing fills behind the main player. It works very well.

The name most likely to resonate with readers here is that of Solo Cissokho and indeed his singing and kora are very impressive as is Harpreet Bansal's violin and the contributions from the leader.

grappa.no

Vic Smith

## BELLEGARDE

**Anba Tonèl** Daniel Bellegarde 045635-673175

Montreal percussionist, teacher and music therapist Daniel Bellegarde grew up in the French West Indies. He has dedicated himself to researching and interpreting the breadth of string and percussion traditions of Haiti, Martinique, Guadeloupe and Dominica. Bellegarde also plays the manouba, a regional species of xylophone. Rounding out the ensemble are violin, banjo, oud, electric guitar, contrabass, electric bass, male voice and the female trio chorus Les Kréoles Suprêmes.

The CD opens with a Haitian vodou chant, uncharacteristically backed by banjo, guitar and bass. *Autobus Nord* is a Haitian twobadou (troubadour, cf Cuban trova) song, performed in both vocal and instrumental versions. With guest accompaniment on hurdy gurdy, *Sérénade Pour Élazie*, a Haitian menuet-Congo with a violin lead, could be mistaken for a stately French country-dance, while the title track is a lively stepping synco-pated Haitian quadrille. Drawing on the Haitian jazz repertoire are two contradances, including *Vingt Juin Quatre Avril*, where Bellegarde's manouba can be heard.

Daniel Bellegarde



Representing Martinique is the quadrille *Haute Taille* (*Tall Size*). Two quadrilles from Guadeloupe, *Avan Dé* and *Pantalon*, combine a violin lead with the shuffle rhythm found widely in the Caribbean. From Dominica, the now Commonwealth wrested from France after the Seven Years' War, Bellegarde includes *Flirtation*, a quadrille, a formal couples or circle dance genre. Traditionally accompanied by accordion, tambourine, scraper and percussion, here the ensemble renders the tune on banjo and violin, and as in other moments, listeners will detect a certain resonance with Louisiana Creole or Cajun music. Altogether, *Anba Tonèl* is a welcome essay on the traditional styles of the French-speaking Caribbean, resituated in the cosmopolitan 21st Century.

danielbellegarde.com

Michael Stone

## GRAHAM HINE

**Invisible Man** Sunhouse SH028

## DAVID EVANS

**Lonesome Midnight Dream** Blind Lemon BLR-CD1801

During the great British blues boom of the 1960s Brett Marvin & The Thunderbolts were the anarchist punks of the scene. Rodent residents in the basement club Studio 51, they held two fingers up to blues purism with their wild and eccentric performances featuring the thumping Zob Stick (a pole studded with bottle tops with an old boot attached to one end). There was no blues band around that remotely resembled this lot, even Fleetwood Mac couldn't match the Brett's killer version of *Dust My Broom*. Why? Because standing aloof, slightly to one side of all the mayhem was a man who could really play great slide guitar... Graham Hine.

Fred McDowell was one of the legendary bluesmen who found their way to Studio 51 for the Bretts' Sunday drop-in sessions. His influence is very present on *Invisible Man* as Hine bookends the album starting with Fred's *A Few Short Lines* and ending with his own composition *New Line*, while returning to McDowell patented guitar licks, phrases and rhythms on occasion throughout the album. Graham's slide guitar technique, along with his tonal control, is impeccable throughout all ten tracks and, while not the strongest of singers, he uses his voice effectively, particularly on his emotive rendition of Sleepy John Estes' great song *Floating Bridge*.

Along with McDowell and Estes, Graham get to grips with items previously recorded by Son House, Robert Johnson, and Blind Willie Johnson while the remaining five tracks are all his own compositions of which the title track is a standout. This track, along with *A Few Short Lines* and Johnson's *Travelling Riverside*, is given added propulsion by Malcolm Mortimore's effective drums and percussion. From these gritty, driving tracks through to his reflective *What Am I To Do* and the gentle instrumental *Home From Home*, Graham Hine, the invisible man, continues in his own individual way to make music that takes shape in the listener's ear to good effect.

grahamhine.com

As steady as Mount Rushmore, David Evans (not the UK singer/guitarist) plays the blues the same way he has for the past 50-plus years. He plays 'em straight and he plays 'em solid. His blues are preserved in granite, they don't shift or deviate, they just get more weatherbeaten as time goes on. If David had made a few 78s, disappeared from view for 30 or 40 years and then been re-discovered, he'd surely be playing his music exactly the same as he did in the past.