

2015



Mariza *Mundo*

(Warner Music Portugal) Reviewed in #113

As reported in the last issue (#113), Portugal's leading lady of *fado* is in a very happy place right now – good news for anyone who has previously given *fado* a wide berth due its tendency to be plaintive and frankly miserable. Several classic *fados* do feature on this album, but there are also some extremely catchy power ballads like 'Saudade Solta', written by the Deolinda brothers Pedro da Silva and Luís José Martins. Mariza has teamed up again with the Spanish producer Javier Limón, and they clearly have an affinity as this is a bold and beautiful album proving Mariza is still one of the ultimate performers around. *JF*



Titi Robin & Mehdi Nassouli *Taziri*

(World Village) Reviewed in #109

The lithe, supple and catchy 'De Mashreq à Maghreb' has been a favourite track this year. Its name takes us from the east to the west of the Arab world and this whole album – entitled after a Berber girl's name meaning 'Moonlight' – is a delight. The music is composed by Titi Robin for this collaboration with the Moroccan Mehdi Nassouli on vocals (in Arabic) and *gimbri* (Gnawa bass lute). But don't think this is Titi Robin goes Gnawa, the inspiration ranges much wider and it includes Zé Luis Nascimento on percussion and Francis Varis on accordion alongside Robin's delicate guitar and *buzuq*. *SB*

BALLAKÉ SISSOKO
VINCENT SEGAL



MUSIQUE DE NUIT

Ballaké Sissoko & Vincent Segal *Musique de Nuit*

(No Format!) Reviewed in #111

Ballaké Sissoko is one of Mali's great *kora* players and Vincent Segal is a French cellist and producer of remarkable refinement. Their debut, *Chamber Music*, was one of Jo Frost's picks of 2010 and this is just as good – perhaps better as the duo have performed together so much they seem to respond to each other instinctively. The contrast of plucked and bowed strings is much of the magic, although Segal is frequently playing pizzicato or creating percussive or flute-like sounds on his cello. The title comes from the fact that much of the album was recorded at nighttime on Sissoko's rooftop in Bamako. *SB*



Mahsa Vahdat *Traces of an Old Vineyard*

(KKV) Reviewed in #107

There's an intensity to Vahdat's voice that really compels you to listen. She sings songs about wine, love, beauty, hope and freedom, by the Persian poets Hafez, Rumi and Khayyam, still revered in Iran today where Vahdat lives, despite all the difficulties that brings as a female musician who isn't allowed to perform in public. "If you ban someone from singing, it's like telling them not to smile or cry," Vahdat said earlier this year (in #107). Credit must also be given to her Norwegian label KKV who have supported both Mahsa and her sister Marjan, enabling us to hear this deeply soulful music. *JF*



Various Artists *Africa Express Presents... Terry Riley's In C Mali*

(Transgressive Records) Reviewed in #107

There's been plenty of interpretations of Terry Riley's minimalist masterpiece 'In C' but this one, from the Africa Express team, led by conductor and violinist André de Ridder, is surely the most original. Recorded in Bamako and performed in the Turbine Hall of Tate Modern to celebrate the piece's 50th anniversary, it grabs you from the outset, with resonating *balafons* that underpin the whole piece. The layers build as *kalimba*, *kora*, *calabash* and other instruments join, until you're completely hypnotised by this superb showcase of West African music. *JF*