

Anelis Assumpção Taurina

Scubidu (46 mins)

★★★★★

Brazilian rebel's daughter is a chip off the old block



Not for nothing is Anelis Assumpção the daughter of the peculiar and rebellious Brazilian musician Itamar

Assumpção. Itamar took part in São Paulo's Vanguarda Paulista during the 1970s and 80s, a movement responsible for the birth of the city's independent circuit. A Jimi Hendrix aficionado, his music blended classical samba with rock, jazz and reggae, creating a language of his own. Anelis clearly follows in her father's footsteps and *Taurina*, her third album, is a quite stunning example of her tremendous elegance and style.

Cris Scabello and Mauricio Fleury, from Brazilian Afrobeat band Bixiga 70, are an integral part of *Taurina*'s outstanding band and they help Anelis build a sensuous world where straightforward traditional samba, reggae-meets-soul songs ('Mortal à Toa' and 'Paint My Dreams') and delirious pop marvels such as 'Segunda a Sexta' make every bit of sense together. The mouth-watering lyrics frequently address food and drinks of all sorts of flavour; no wonder that *Taurina* leaves us with such a brilliant aftertaste. Assumpção never misses a trick, but it's standout tracks like the horn-propelled, genre-defying 'Chá de Jasmim' that make a strong case for the singer being mandatory listening.

GONÇALO FROTA

TRACK TO TRY *Chá de Jasmim*

Calypso Rose So Calypso!

Because Music (45 mins)

★★★★★

Rose continues to bloom



After the triumph of 2016's *Far From Home*, which went platinum in France and won her the Artist of the Year

award at WOMEX, Calypso Rose makes a swift return with a set of well-chosen covers – half from her own illustrious back catalogue and half paying tribute to the artists who have influenced her music and her life. Her calypso and soca roots are much in evidence on 'Voodoo Lay Loo' and 'Sweet Brown Sugar' but this is a set that ranges

promiscuously across a diversity of styles. A couple of songs are leftovers from the *Far From Home* sessions produced by Ivan Duran from Stonetree Records, including a rather fine cover of 'Rivers of Babylon' and a brilliant, bubbling, African-sounding rendition of Rose's own 'Wah Fu Dance!', on which she is joined by Manu Chao and Angélique Kidjo. The majority of tracks, however, were masterminded by the Swedish producer Gordon Cyrus, including a righteous roots-reggae take on Nat King Cole's 'Calypso Blues', the joyous, jump-up carnival groove of 'Israel By Bus' and the after-hours blues vibe of 'How Long'. Thanks to being teamed with a series of great producers, Rose is, in her late 70s, making the best-sounding records of her long career.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

TRACK TO TRY *Wah Fu Dance!*

Chancha Via Circuito Bienaventuranza

Wonderwheel Recordings (43 mins)

★★★★★

Andean electronic travels



In recent years, the world of electronic music in Latin America has moved from

revitalising *cumbia* with urgent beats to a more reflective period exploring the melodies, instruments and spirituality of the Andes and its native cultures. This is certainly the trajectory of Argentinian producer Pedro Canale (aka Chancha) who has moved from being one of the main innovators behind digital *cumbia* to one of many working in this new genre often called Andean beat.

Canale is clearly thoroughly enconced in Andean culture – there are healthy lashings of *charango* (lute), flute, bird calls and indigenous melodies throughout, and a final track featuring simply an otherworldly chant and hand-drum. It's impossible not to feel a sense of bliss during the beautiful vocal melody of 'Niño Hermoso' or the raindrop-like beat of 'Kawa Kawa'. Different textures are explored on the Caribbean-tinged folk-dancehall of 'La Victoria' and 'Barú', which features an ominous bass line and a lively cornucopia of sampled sounds.

However, often the music is too subdued, lacking the immediacy needed for dance music and the complexity warranted for sole listening pleasure. The Andes is always in full view, but often it obscures the goal of making a great electronic

album, leaving an unbalanced fusion in its wake.

RUSS SLATER

TRACK TO TRY *Niño Hermoso*

Eliana Cuevas Golpes y Flores

Aima Records (44 mins)

★★★★★

A passionate musical missive to her Venezuelan homeland

Eliana Cuevas has a superb voice



– her timbre is polished, her manner effortless, her enunciation packing something of the precision

and understated power of Mercedes Sosa. A key quality of *Golpes y Flores* is the way in which her vocals float above a pulsating, fast-paced but rootsy rhythm, provided by Afro-Venezuelan percussionist Yonathan 'El Morochó' Gavidia and friends; the album title means 'Beats and Flowers', reflecting a combination of hard and soft and, perhaps, of violence and beauty (which would seem to define Venezuela right now).

Frenetic bass lines, as on the scintillating 'Seré Libre' (I Will Be Free), add a further layer of rich textures, pushing the sound almost towards jazz fusion. Some of the keyboard antics slightly overplay this aspect, and Cuevas' sole effort in English – 'A Tear on the Ground' – is a slip. But there's vitality, vision and genuine feeling on this musical love letter to her tragic homeland from an artist exiled in Canada.

CHRIS MOSS

TRACK TO TRY *Seré Libre*

Steve Dawson Lucky Hand

Black Hen Music (46 mins)

★★★★★

Luck has nothing to do with it



Dawson is a virtuoso guitarist who has quietly put out albums of strong, bluesy playing via various projects

over the years. The rich strings introducing 'The Circuit Rider of Pigeon Forge' states his aim of looking beyond solo guitar for this record, which the playful but complex weaving of the instruments further demonstrates. 'Bentonia Blues' is even better, with a slower guitar working beautifully with Charlie McCoy's ace harmonica lines. Songs like this, dovetailed with 'Hale Road Revelation', give a strong

suggestion of travel and creates cinematic soundscapes which, with effective use of microphones, adds to an overall feeling of expanding space.

Elsewhere, subtle tunes like the solo 'Bugscuffle' and 'Little Harpeth' work well as palate cleansers after some of the more epic pieces; indeed, 'Little Harpeth' contains the strongest and most interesting melody of the lot, with some welcome light ukulele adding texture and almost slipping into an Eastern musical style. While, overall, *Lucky Hand* certainly pats itself on the back at points, with playing and recording this impeccably precise, that can be forgiven.

GLENN KIMPTON

TRACK TO TRY *Little Harpeth*

The Fretless

Live from the Art Farm

The Fretless (38 mins)

★★★★★

Fret not; Irish trad is in good hands



If it weren't for the enthused reaction of the small audience gathered before The Fretless in the Art Farm, a barn in upstate New York, the listener would surely conclude this album was a carefully arranged studio recording, such is the quality of the performance. The Canadian quartet, comprising fiddles, viola and cello, take Irish trad in a new direction with this mix of traditional and original tunes.

'Maggie's Set' takes us on a joyous journey, beginning with a contemporary take on 'Johnny O'Leary's' led by Eric Wright's driving cello, passing through the sliding melody of 'The Miller's Maggot' and closing with the virtuosic 'The Salley Gardens'. The band's arrangement of trad tune 'The Killavil Fancy', with its melancholy chord voicings, showcases their ability to honour tradition without fear of exploring their own innovative sound, while their take on 'Dawning of the Day' is nothing less than stunning. Their capacity to draw such percussive sounds from their instruments adds yet another interesting texture to an already striking sound.

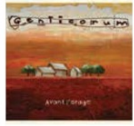
How exciting it is to hear a truly talented group of musicians fusing the authentic with the contemporary, bringing traditional sounds into the present day and inviting new audiences to experience their magic.

RACHEL CUNNINGHAM

TRACK TO TRY *The Killavil Fancy*

Genticorum
Avant l'Orage

Genticorum (46 mins)

**A ray of French-Canadian medieval sunshine**

Mesmeric repetition dominates and elevates; this is a real trip of tracks saturated with

ancient throwback sounds and tunes which take you to another era when life was simpler. It's reminiscent of folk music of the Middle Ages with a joyous beat and Genticorum's sound, while perhaps rather niche, is undeniably accomplished, blending Jew's harp, fiddle, flute (perhaps a nod to Jethro Tull), guitar and accordion. The latter is their main driving force and the combination of piano and diatonic accordion is impressive, seamlessly melding with their signature three-part vocal harmonies on well-rounded, quirky songs of shipwrecks and more.

These charming tunes get under your skin and scatter their glittery Canadian-Gallic wisdom and before you know it, the intricately nuanced old-school music has whisked you away to a Canadian folk festival amid cobbled streets. If you're looking for a steady summer CD to calm and uplift, this is it.

LUENDY SCOTT

TRACK TO TRY *Lenoir***Gil, Nando & Gal**
Trinca de Ases

Gelêia Geral/Altafone (2 CDs, 113 mins)

**A cosy evening with three Brazilian singing legends**

Gilberto Gil, Gal Costa and Nando Reis are key figures in MPB (Música Popular Brasileira): Gil and

Gal arrived with the *tropicalia* movement of the 1960s; Reis from the moment he took Brazil by storm with rock band Titãs back in the 80s. Each of them, individually, already carries a lot of history and an almost bottomless music vault. As a trio, they are a gathering of epic proportions. But what often happens whenever you get together a group of superstars with such a strong background is that they end up concentrating a bit too much on the past.

And that's precisely what we hear in *Trinca de Ases*. Recorded live in São

Paulo, this show is filled with mutual compliments and declarations of how much they love one another; all the while there is a palpable feeling of a nice cozy evening among family and friends. *Trinca de Ases* has that kind of campfire tone. It sounds like an uncomplicated rendezvous around Gilberto Gil and Nando Reis' songs (Costa was never a songwriter), piling up classics such as Gil's 'Palco', 'Ela' and 'Copo Vazio' alongside Reis' 'Espatódea', 'O Seu Lado de Cá' and 'All Star'. There are also a few visits to Caetano Veloso, Luiz Melodia and Stevie Wonder.

Trinca de Ases is a two-hour party with this notable trio. But just like a get-together with friends, you end up keeping the memory of the experience and not so much any extraordinary musical moments.

GONÇALO FROTA

TRACK TO TRY *Espatódea***Luis Pérez**
Mexico Mágico Cosmico

Mr Bongo (46 mins)

**Progressive psych wig-outs from Mexico**

This re-release of a 1981 Mexican government-sponsored music project is a curiosity in many ways. It is an album that has almost as

many titles as tracks: in addition to *Mexico Mágico Cosmico*, the cover boasts the Nahuatl-language *Ipan In Xiktli Meztl* and its Spanish equivalent, *En El Ombligo De La Luna*. The English translation, which the original artwork omits, is 'In the Navel of the Moon'. Three of the four tracks are suites dedicated 'to the cult of the sun' while the fourth is the title-track ('Ipan In Xiktli Meztl', that is).

Brighton-based label Mr Bongo, known for Brazilian rarities and classic Latin reissues, may have discovered Luis Pérez (b. 1951) via his psychedelic rock. This related but very different material dates from research he undertook from 1971, exploring native Mexican music and instruments – especially wind and percussion – which he learned to play, blending them with synthesizers and electric guitars to produce a spacey, ethereal sound somewhere between Kraftwerk and Pink Floyd. It inspired many young Mexican musicians to explore ethno-jazz and ethno-rock ideas. For the rest of us, it's a cool, cosmic soundtrack for meditating, ▶

**TOP OF THE WORLD****BUY NOW****Moira Smiley**
Unzip the Horizon

Moira Smiley (49 mins)

**Panoramic folk, with a who's who of today's alt-folk talent**

Unzip the Horizon is a remarkable document for many reasons.

First and foremost there is Moira Smiley's voice, which commands attention by virtue of its mellifluous tone, impressive range and unflinching application. There are 14 compositions here, which describe personal journeys and convey a sense of the desperate plight, profound imagination and capacity for regeneration within the human species. Steeped in the work of early music and contemporary classical composers, such as Hildegard von Bingen, Arvo Pärt and Louis Andriessen, Smiley channels millennia-old dissonant harmonies

and melodic lessons from Eastern Europe with the shape-note singing tradition of colonial-era America. A multi-instrumentalist who excels on banjo, accordion and piano, Smiley is also a skilled 'hambonist' – the hambone (or Juba dance) being an African American style of body percussion. Smiley's body serves as the most intimate and sympathetic accompanist, while the album's guest artists include Merrill Garbus of tUnE-yArDs, Leah and Chloe Smith of Rising Appalachia, Anna & Elizabeth and Sam Lee. For all sorts of reasons, *Unzip the Horizon* is a sublime tapestry of 21st-century world music and a poetic testament to the transformative nature of singing the truth.

DOUG DELOACH

TRACK TO TRY *Wiseman*