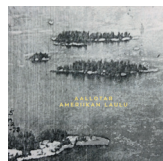


Aallotar Ameriikan Lauulu

Nordic Notes (36 mins)



Transatlantic chamber folk



Aallotar are a transatlantic 'chamber folk' duo, comprising Finnish accordionist Teija Niku and

Finnish-American fiddler Sara Pajunen. In the early 1900s Niku and Pajunen's families lived in neighbouring regions of Finland. However, while Pajunen's ancestors went on to cross the Atlantic, Niku's family remained in Finland. This personal dimension lends a wistful quality to much of Aallotar's music. *Ameriikan Lauulu*'s opening title-track captures this nostalgic feeling particularly well. With stirring close harmonies, it speaks of those left behind by loved ones who have made the journey across the Atlantic. On a couple of the album's other tracks ('Metsäkukkia' and 'Tuuditte Teuuli'), lyrics are sung in English. While this makes sense from the point of Aallotar's transatlantic theme, for me it somehow breaks a spell.

Pajunen and Niku are clearly passionate about negotiating their shared personal and cultural histories. This passion and integrity shines through on *Ameriikan Lauulu*, with deeply felt arrangements demonstrating high-quality musicianship. Overall, it makes for an engaging and immersive listen that expertly blends the traditional and modern sides of Finnish folk.

MERLYN DRIVER

TRACK TO TRY *Ameriikan Lauulu*

Auntie Flo Radio Highlife

Brownwood Recordings (54 mins)



DJ's global sounds move from the dance floor to the radio



Radio Highlife is the fruit of many years' worth of Auntie Flo touring around the world, tuning in to local

stations between DJ sets and recording the conversations and activities around him. Each track features a recycled field recording (from Havana, Marrakech, Paris, Bali, Glasgow...), around which he assembles a soulful and sunny album that drifts off the dance floor and into a more temperate mood, better suited to radio sets and

headphones than the club speakers of previous releases.

This is the Glaswegian's third outing, and his first on Brownwood, though he's no stranger to the family – *Radio Highlife* takes its name from his show on Worldwide FM, another of Brownwood label founder Gilles Peterson's projects. It's the perfect place for it, too: the album is infused with Brownwood's forward-thinking outlook, that second-nature global-ness that makes a nonsense out of borders and barriers. There are numerous guest musicians – including Senegalese multi-instrumentalist Mame Ndiack and Cuban percussionist Yissy García – so that rumba rhythms and talking drum pepper moments of NY soul and jazz harmonies, all assembled with the lightest of touches over an electronic pulse.

Comprising mostly short tracks punctuated with atmospheric skits and jingles and only a couple of stand-alone singles, *Radio Highlife* is a well-considered album, flowing gently as it winds its way through the light jostle of cities and styles.

TIM ROMAIN

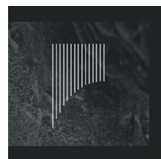
TRACK TO TRY *Havana Rhythm Dance*

Jean-François Bélanger Les Entrailles de la Montagne

Jean-François Bélanger (83 mins)



Exploring the music of Scandinavia and beyond



Jean-François Bélanger is a French-Canadian composer and multi-instrumentalist.

In recent years, he has focused on recording and releasing a 'Nordic diptych', which explores musical influences and instruments from Scandinavia. *Les Entrailles de la Montagne* is the second instalment, following *Les Vents Orfèvres*, which was released in 2014 and nominated for several Canadian Folk Music Awards.

Although his main focus is on Scandinavian fiddles, such as the Hardanger, *nyckelharpa*, *kontrabasharpa* and *tenorharpa*, Bélanger also colours his explorations with diverse instruments from other countries. Opening track 'Les Eaux de l'Oubli / Jökulhlaup' ventures perhaps the furthest from Scandinavian soil and sound, with *sitar*, *tabla* and *riq* (Arabic tambourine) all featured prominently. Elsewhere,



Alan Cole

Phillip Henry True North

Dragonfly Roots (54 mins)



One half of folk duo goes solo to explore the slide guitar



Ten years ago, Phillip Henry (best known as one half of the award-winning Devon folk duo,

Edgelarks, with Hannah Martin) left England for Kolkata to learn the mysteries of the slide guitar from India's finest exponent of the instrument, Debashish Bhattacharya. This solo release is his testament to a decade of discovering the instrument's soul among musicians far and wide.

It is a pure solo record in that Henry is the sole musician, playing a mesmerising spread of strings from National and Weissenborn guitars to the dobro and the *chaturangui* – a 22-string slide guitar invented

by Bhattacharya. The result is a subtle, gentle, brooding album of delicately plucked instrumentals interspersed with softly sung songs of the road. This is a reflection on a decade of touring the world, with music inspired by the large, elemental landscapes of Australia, Canada and India, as well as the wilder fringes of England. Harp-like *chaturangui* Indian classical meditations segue into blues standards, folk and country longing. There are contemporary covers of Tim Edey, Tim O'Brien, and a soaring, unexpected take on Paul Oakenfold's 90s dance anthem, 'Not Over Yet'. Play this and slip into a slide guitar reverie.

NATHANIEL HANDY

TRACK TO TRY *Reverence Revisited*