

the perfect soundtrack to a chilled summer's night. That's certainly the feeling on album closer, 'Out of Time', a timeless little track where you can taste the midnight vibe. It's a flawless finale to what is a beautifully evocative listen.

BILLY ROUGH
TRACK TO TRY *Supermoonlight*

Pulse of Berat City of 1001 Windows

Oda 3
 ★★★★★



Welcome to the city of Berat, Albania, 2,400 years young, and welcoming, in its time, Roman, Slavic, Byzantine and Turkish cultures, and now you, the listener. Put your ear to *City of 1001 Windows* and you'll hear a colourful, soulful and virtuoso representation of the urban music of Berat, from its deep past to its vibrant present. Here are songs of love – and heartbreak, of course – and richly evocative instrumentals. Recorded at the Palace of Culture of Berat, with veteran singers Petrit Berisha and Ludmilla Baballëku and a cast of seven crack players, on clarinet, accordion, lute, drum, fiddle and guitar, it was produced by Oda 3 – comprising Albania's Edit Pula and the old *BBC World Routes* team of broadcaster Lucy Durán and sound recordist Martin Appleby.

It's a music redolent of its surroundings and of Berat's long, long history. For lovers of Balkan music, this is a brand new window opening onto what was hitherto rarely seen or heard music. The song names reveal as much as the tunes they carry – 'I Took the Mandolin & Tare's Daughter'; 'Girl, Break Those Embroidery Needles'; 'Ah You Blooming Rose'.

What more do you need to know, if you know those songs?

TIM CUMMING
TRACK TO TRY *Çupë Theyji Ato Gjylpëra (Girl, Break Those Embroidery Needles)*

She Shanties Lubber's Hole

She Shanties
 ★★★★★



The clue to the USP with She Shanties is in the name: women singing sea shanties. This is their third album, following in the tongue-in-cheek tradition of their previous nautically

named releases, *Spanker Boom* and *Futtock Shrouds*. But there is something much less tongue-in-cheek about what they deliver.

One of the most brilliant signatures of She Shanties is that they sing songs sung by men without changing the lyrics. I hate the way lyrics are changed based on whether the singer is male or female – like that matters! In the same spirit as The Pogues, when Cáit O'Riordan sang 'I'm a Man You Don't Meet Every Day', She Shanties deliver them straight, and their music is all the more effective for it. Indeed, song 'Bound to Australia' carries the exact same chorus as O'Riordan's classic.

These are a mix of self-penned and traditional shanties, all a cappella and with solos that have a rough, raspy authenticity, such as on the wonderfully atmospheric and coarse 'Old Moke'. They also make sensitive and astute reference to the origins of sea shanties in West African work songs brought to the Americas in the slave trade, and from there to the sailing ships of the 19th century – exemplified by 'Johnny Come Down to Hilo'.

NATHANIEL HANDY
TRACK TO TRY *Old Moke*

Shono Kolkhozy Traktor

DPL-Music
 ★★★★★



If you're a fan of the great festival-pleasing, throat-singing Yat-Kha, then this should be on your radar. Shono's founder, Alexander Arkhincheev doesn't have the big personality of Yat-Kha's Albert Kuvezin, but the band he founded in 2014 has also shaped its sound on the rhythms and traditions of the Eurasian grasslands.

Arkhincheev comes from the Russian Republic of Buryatia which borders Mongolia. He's passionate about reviving the lost heritage of his country, particularly Buryat throat-singing, and he delves into songs he learned from his grandparents as well as his own compositions.

A big fan of Western rock music, Shono's sound mixes traditional zithers and horsehead fiddles with drums, guitar and bass to craft compelling music based on the galloping rhythms which underpin so much of the region's music.

The album's hit single is the title track whose video is a playful take on a tractor ride across the vast plains,

while 'The Praising of the Twelve Animal Symbols of the Year' has all the 'crowd goes wild' elements of an encore on a festival stage. Shono know how to please an audience, as well as honour and preserve 'the great heritage of Buryat culture'.

FIONA TALKINGTON
TRACK TO TRY *Kolkhozy Traktor*

Sourdurent L'Herbe de Détourne

Bongo Joe
 ★★★★★



Quirky Swiss label Bongo Joe can almost guarantee a splendid left-field time for all. This is no exception. The

French folk experimentalist Ernest Bergez made his name as the solo Sourdure, but now helms the four-piece Sourdurent (French third-person plural; same pronunciation; clever!). Still rooted in his rugged native Auvergne and sung in the Occitan language, the music gets a fuller sound for studio and concert stage. Much of its character derives from Jacques Puech's *cabrette*, a small regional bagpipe, whose unsettling drone underlies fife, banjo, bass lute, violin, assorted electronic noises and, above all, Bergez' sometimes almost deranged vocals to suggest a soundtrack to a dystopian medieval drama like *Witchfinder General*.

As well as rural France, their music can take you to North Africa, the Middle East or even the kind of fictitious hybrid where once 3 Mustaphas 3 cavorted. Four brief interludes serve almost as musical palate-cleansers to prepare you for the drama of madcap numbers like 'La Dumenchada' and 'Franc de Bruch', or the epic 'Chamin Ne Vòl Pas' and 'Le Tonnerrez / Marche de Palladuc'. The Occitan-folk ambience inevitably conjures comparisons with vocal groups like San Salvador and Cocanha. Equally thrilling, this is more dislocated and demented.

MARK SAMPSON
TRACK TO TRY *La Dumenchada*

Tellefs reel date

Taragot Sounds
 ★★★★★



'Why combine Norwegian Hardanger fiddle tunes with Irish reels and jigs?' asks Tellef Kvifte. A good

question, but given Kvifte's insatiable musical curiosity it's not surprising that the latest of his collaborations, *reel date*, reveals another fascinating musical journey of discovery.

He's been playing Hardanger fiddle and tin whistles (as well as many other instruments) since the 70s and on *reel date* he sets feet tapping as he and his multi-instrumental band (including thoughtfully textured guitars, banjos and drums) explore the meeting points between Norwegian folk dance and those irresistible Irish tunes.

But there's a twist: the main voice of the album isn't from either of these traditions! It's the Eastern European *taragot*, (basically a soprano sax made of wood, hence its sweet tone), so it really is hard to know where one tradition ends and another begins as the tunes within each track move seamlessly from one to another.

Kvifte's *taragot* trills and tongues. It caresses us with soft melancholic phrases or hurls us onto the dance floor. It's playful, haunting, bluesy and mischievous. The excellent sleeve notes deserve a mention for giving details of all the tunes and how the album came about.

FIONA TALKINGTON
TRACK TO TRY *Den Kaldsteikte / Fermoy Lasses*

Jean-Luc Thomas & Gab Faure Gwiad

Hinustica
 ★★★★★



Jean-Luc Thomas and Gab Faure are a French duo who play flute and violin – helped by occasional hand

percussion – to create a free-wheeling fusion of folk and global influences with unexpected bursts of improvisation that veer towards free-form jazz. Thomas is a flautist steeped in Celtic traditions who has played with musicians from Africa, India and South America, while Faure studied classical violin and played in an orchestra for ten years before also becoming interested in world music. Their album is titled *Gwiad*, they say, because it's a Breton word for weaving, and their music is a patchwork inspired by their travels and encounters. It's impressively varied, with lively jigs and reels interspersed with other instrumental pieces that are far more experimental. So the opening 'An Disput / Gaspard / Melchior / Balthazar' is a flute-led dance piece ▶