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 guide
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HINDI ZAHRA

Homeland Warner Jazz B00U0RATR2

Homeland, the second studio album from Franco-Moroccan musician Hindi Zahra, takes listeners on what sounds like a deeply personal journey through a rich musical heritage. The record effortlessly blends laid-back European vibes recalling the likes of Air and Portishead, with the melodic traditions of North Africa and France along with elements taken from the worlds of jazz, folk and electronica.

The great thing is though, that unlike so many other records which try to self-consciously fuse musical styles, *Homeland* does it all with a coolness and composition that speaks of great musical wisdom.

From the brooding desert blues of opening track *To The Forces* to the café jazz sounds of *Un Jour* the record explores its own history in a way that never feels forced. Strong vocals, instrumentation and songwriting carry the record throughout. It's where all these styles come together though, and Hindi Zahra crafts her own unique soundscape, that the album really does shine. *Dreams* is the best example of what Hindi Zahra can do, and is definitely the song that will define summer 2015 for me.

Overall *Homeland* is an excellent album and Hindi Zahra a real emerging talent on the world music scene, one to watch.

www.hindi-zahra.com

Liam Thompson

TRITONUS

Urbanus Zytglogge ZYT 4966

Despite a family tree stretching back to the mid-1970s, to my shame neither hide nor hair of Tritonus ever previously registered. Originally founded in Ostschweiz (literally, eastern Switzerland but also a geopolitical collective of cantons), this Tritonus has nothing to do with the West German prog rock group of the 1970s. Aside, that is, from both referencing the German-language musical term 'tritonus' (tritone) – otherwise known as 'diabolus in musica' in Latin; or 'the Devil's interval' in English. One early trio incarnation was named Tritonus Diabolus.

With the exception of hackbrett (hammered dulcimer) player Michaela Walder (who joined in 2011), the current core line-up of Felicia Kraft, Urs Klausner, Daniel Som, Lea Zanola, Andreas Cincera, Andrea Brunner and Andreas Ambühl has been together for two or so decades. It tells in their layered instrumental arrangements. Tritonus sing and tell their tales – where words are involved, sung in Schwizerdütsch (Swiss German) – and, on *Urbanus*, in their use of the unifying narrative device of a town's nightwatchman on his rounds. At their disposal they have a sound palette of Swiss folk, art music and jazz instruments. The traditional Swiss ones have names, some in regional dialect, like *hümmelchen* (bagpipe), *chalumeau* and *schalmei*



Hindi Zahra

(shawms), *schwegel* (a transverse flute) and *trümpi* (Jew's harp). Less obscure instrumentation includes *drehleier* (hurdy-gurdy), violin, viola, viola d'amore, double bass, bass clarinet and saxophone. Felicia Kraft sings. Percussion is especially well deployed, for example, on tick-tock *Tanz Der Nachtgestalten* (*Dance Of The Night Figures/Forms*).

This octet's take on folk music is a combination of original tradition-based material, historical manuscript research, art music with baroque flavourings and traditional elements. Much as Munich's Fraunhofer Saitenmusik similarly swung from similarly deliciously blurry folk and baroque lianas, much of Tritonus' music is predicated on dance. Theirs, though, is emphatically Swiss. The opening statement, *Zur Blawen Entten* (*At The Blue Duck* – a Zurich inn name), for example, is a *zwiefacher*, a dance switching between three/four and two/four time. Tritonus' *Urbanus* opus is a 24-track masterpiece. A worthy successor to the magnificent, genre-spanning Fraunhofer Saitenmusik. Main notes in German, French, English and Italian. Detailed track information and lyrics in German only.

www.tritonus.ch

Ken Hunt

JUDY DYBLE

Gathering The Threads Starcrazy SC001-003

Proud possessor of one of the most genuinely unmistakable voices in folk-rock, Judy was Fairport Convention's first lead singer back in the late-'60s, before moving on to Giles, Giles & Fripp and Trader Horne, and barely two years after the breakup of the latter took what became nearly a quarter-century's sabbatical from musical pursuits until one of those 'right place, right time' occasions (1997's *Cropredy*) persuaded her that she could still sing! Judy's increased confidence thenceforth has ensured that the past decade or so has been filled with numerous, often surprising musical collaborations, and a series of solo albums of remarkable quality and imagination.

Here, then, is a life-spanning three-disc retrospective that also cannily looks forward. Unprepossessingly subtitled *Fifty Years Of Stuff*, it's been lovingly and fastidiously compiled (and released) by Judy herself. It's arranged strictly chronologically: Disc One (*The Early Years*) takes in the (long pre-Fairport) Judy & The Folkmen; a sequence of weird teenage improvisational noodling that

will surely embarrass fellow-collaborator (and then boyfriend) Richard Thompson; a pair of hitherto unreleased Fairport demos; obscure GG&F tapes; an appearance on Gerry Fitzgerald's *Mouseproof* LP; some unreleased '70s demos; and two early-'80s curiosities made with Adrian Wagner (a cover of *See Emily Play* and a somewhat optimistic advert for an "amazing" brand of tape!). Disc Two charts Judy's trio of 'comeback' albums from the noughties involving Marc Swordfish (*Enchanted Garden*, *Spindle* and *The Whorl*), then sundry unreleased gems from collaborative projects with an impressive range of musicians; rarity-status single and vinyl cuts; and the punk-supercharged 2008 hit revisit of *One Sure Thing* with The Conspirators. Disc Three, subtitled *Onwards*, covers the past five fruitful years: 2009's *Talking With Strangers* album and its bonus tracks, 2013's *Flow And Change*, further intriguing experimental collaborations with the likes of Fūxa, Sleepyard and Sand Snowman; three recent – and seriously charming – new recordings with Alistair Murphy at the helm, including the gorgeous *Take Me Dancing* and a swinging duet featuring ex-Trader Horne partner Jackie McAuley; and finally, bringing Judy's career almost full circle, sparkling 2014 live recordings of *Jenny May* and the number that for many fans started it all, *If I Had A Ribbon Bow*.

Gathering The Threads is an object lesson in packaging too: its supremely attractive design, and informative (and frank) booklet notes (penned by Judy herself), precisely complement the vital music within. Truly magnificent.

www.judydyble.com

David Kidman

PETER KNIGHT'S GIGSPANNER

Layers Of Ages Gigspanner GSCD003

Peter Knight's ambitions always extended beyond the day job and now he's freed himself from that particular long-term engagement he is starting to unfurl his colours. In this, *Gigspanner's* third recording, Mr Knight delves straight back into tradition, something you might have expected him to have sidelined in favour of his own compositions, and he shows a willingness to turn the expected inside out and to place it back as neat as it was before being taken. *She Moves Through The Fair* is fair game, multiple gentle versions have reinforced the idea of a dead love come back, but eight-plus minutes of hypnotic