

SONGLINES

a new peak with his recent acoustic releases from back home in Mali. translates as 'Ancestor', pays homage to heritage and the title-track is a tribute to (dly) direct ancestor, the 13th century Wande empire Sundiata Keita. Great instrumental work from his long-time guitarist Kante Manfila, *kora* from Toumani Diabaté and swinging female backing vocals.

Reviewed in #33

but DJ Shantel is something else. Here's a guy who has plum brandy-fuelled roots in the Balkans and knows how this music works. I was already a CD convert before I was grinding away at his live vodka-giveaway set at WOMEX. There's a real buzz about Balkan brass and Gypsy remix material at the moment and Shantel is one of the reasons. Just listen to the Boban Markovic version of the North African classic 'Ya Rayah', with vocals by Jony Iliev, that opens this album and carry on with Fanfare Ciocărlia, Mahala Rai Banda and more...

Reviewed in #32

BEST ALBUMS of 2005

Kiran Ahluwalia

Kiran Ahluwalia

(Triloka)

Kiran was born in India and raised in Toronto and this is one of the best contemporary *ghazal* albums I've heard in years. She is perhaps the new Najma Akhtar, using the lyrics of Urdu and Punjabi poets in Toronto as well as the Cape Breton fiddling talents of Natalie MacMaster. Ahluwalia's voice is caressing and seductive and the arrangements are magnificent. She only missed a Top of the World selection because she landed in the same issue as Asha Bhosle and Kronos. In short, this is a masterful album (actually her third) and Kiran Ahluwalia is clearly a name to watch.

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It's become customary in this issue to give a personal pick of favourite CDs of the year. All except one (for reasons explained below) were Top of the World choices, but more than that, they are discs I've kept returning to and found myself recommending to friends.

Simon Broughton

The combined... of the great... it's as if the... are slowly

Golden Afrique Vol 1

(Network)

The term Golden Age is over-used, but is a worthy description of the music of the late 60s and 70s after the countries of West Africa achieved independence. These two CDs feature many of the great bands - Baobab de Dakar (Orchestra Baobab), The Rail Band with Salif Keita, Bembeya Jazz, Les Amazones de Guinée, Africa's first all female band - but it makes sense to single any out. Every track is a gem.

