



Aynur

AYNUR

Hevra : Together Sony Music Turkey
88843018342

When Kurdish singer Aynur Dogan's Kalan Records debut *Keçe Kurdan* came out in 2004, it knocked us off our perches – we were so impressed that we put her on the cover. With a fabulous, flexible, powerful voice and huge sense of dynamics, it was a big breakthrough for Kurdish artists into the mainstream in Turkey – as well as getting her noticed in the international 'world music' market. And the production was *big!*

Her move to Sony in 2010 found her shifting to a more pop-influenced format, and eyebrows lifted even further with the news that her latest one was produced by the dreaded Javier Limon who has regularly decried the work of great European women artists, principally by dragging them to the middle of the road and plastering their records with cocktail pianos.

Aynur emerges better than most have done from this process, and the merging of the Kurdish and the flamenco influences – mercifully the piano is almost entirely absent – is well considered. It's certainly not a forced 'fusion'. Spanish and Kurdish percussion work well together, Limon's guitar that often begins tracks is soon well placed alongside Cemil Qocqir's tembur, and when Saul Quirós' flamenco voice comes in on *Derya Kenannda Bir Ev Yapmisam*, its aural movement east seems to jump continents and give a flavour of qawwali. And nothing placed around it is going to diminish the ultra-expressive Aynur voice. Which is why the standout track, for all the production values brought to bear, is a live recording of the impassioned *Sisilê* with just the tembur in accompaniment.

It's an excellent album and would possibly knock the socks off anybody coming to her from a standing start. Just don't expect something with the impact of *Keçe Kurdan*. Re-playing that debut straight after this one, it jumps straight out with its passion and in-your-face instrumentation. Why that's changed might be the influence of a major label and *that* producer, or an artist 'maturing' as it's her right to do.

www.aynurdogan.net

Ian Anderson

CORY SEZNEC

Beauty In The Dirt Captain Pouch Records
CPR002

THE NEW LINE

Can't Hold The Wheel Own Label

Cor blimey, guv. You wait all day for an album informed by both American and African traditions to come along, then two arrive at once. Would you Adam and Eve it?



Born in France, raised in Connecticut and currently residing in Addis Ababa, Corentin 'Cory' Sez nec credits "a multicultural household, extensive travels and musical encounters, and a passion for history" as the sources of the music he creates using guitar, banjo, voice, harmonica and an array of other stringed instruments, in the company of highly-skilled musicians including his Groanbox partner, percussionist Michael Ward-Bergeman.

These are new songs drawn from deep wells, incorporating styles, themes (and occasional floating lyrics) from familiar American folk song sources and casting them into something fresh and distinctive as, for example, in the beautiful combination of banjo and calabash on *East Virginia* or the Appalachian ngoni deployed on *Crab On The Line*. Gospel, jazz, blues early country and (not least) a terrific melodic pop sensibility are all evident at various points on this album's path, while the recurring short Malian and Congolese-influenced acoustic guitar instrumentals *Southern Bound (I-IV)* provide welcome signposts and rests for the intrepid sonic traveller.

Happily, all this cross-continental cross-referencing is executed without ever sounding like a square peg being bashed into a round hole. This isn't some worthy-but-dull project album, but rather the work of a virtuoso musician and gifted songsmith doing what comes naturally. While Ry Cooder comparisons are the most apposite, there's also something in the joyous lightness of touch here that evokes *American Beauty*-era Grateful Dead at their most beatific, while anyone who bought Martin Simpson's *Vagrant Stanzas* will find much to appreciate here too. Listen to *Dragon Tree* on *fRoots 49*.

www.corysez nec.com

Can't Hold The Wheel sees The New Line sticking to well-worn tracks in their repertoire choices, with old-time favourites including *Little Sadie*, *Danville Girl*, *The Old Churchyard* and *Her Bright Smile Haunts Me Still*, and a smattering of more recent singer-songwriter fare like Bob Dylan's *Nobody 'Cept You* and John Prine's *Speed Of The Sound Of Loneliness*. What sets this album a good distance apart from the plethora of releases with similar track-listings is the originality of the arrangements and the quality of performances.

Frontman Brendan Taaffe's mbira playing is something of a revelation (he's studied traditional Shona technique in Zimbabwe) and his interplay with the gourd banjo of North Carolina clawhammer champion Adam Hurt is a joyous groove throughout. Guitarist Colin McCaffrey and drummer Stefan Amidon are subtle, sensitive players and the guest contributions by trumpeter Mike Olson and singer Heather Masse are spot on.

This is a beautifully sung and played record, as appealing for its modest, intimate warmth as Sez nec's is for its ambitious, eclectic brilliance. Get 'em both, folks!

www.brendantaaffe.com

Steve Hunt

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