



Himmerland

HIMMERLAND

Folktone From A Global Corner Tutl SHD198

It's been a few years since Himmerland released their last album, and this third CD sees only two of the original quintet on board. But this version of the band makes a glorious and very varied noise, adding the excellent Nuala Kennedy as guest on a couple of tracks, singing and playing low whistle. While there's a Danish base to much of the music – it's their homeland, after all – it casts its net wide, from Ireland to Africa, Eastern Europe, and even a touch of samba on *Spirende Kærlighed Til Korn*. There are some surprises, like the forward role for the bass guitar on a couple of pieces that brings it close to prog/jazz territory, whilst elsewhere they come on like a powerhouse Nordic folk band (*Konvulsions Låt*, for instance) then send feet tapping and couples roaring round the floor on *Reel From Aerø*. All the members contribute material, which helps keep the variety spicy, and the musicianship throughout is impeccable, with some superb, complex arrangements that still flow quite organically. This third release has been a while coming, but it was definitely worth the wait.

himmerland.it

Chris Nickson

RACHELE ANDRIOLI & ROCCO NIGRO

Maletiempu Fonoshere FNF 117

The central element in this very impressive album is the voice of Rachele Andrioli. She has one of those voices that grabs you by the lapels and says, "You need to listen to this!"

This is the third album from this pair, with Rocco's piano accordion the main foil for Rachele's voice, but she also sings to the hand-held drum, as so many female singers from the south of Italy do, and she also solos on the flauto armonico, which would seem to have a similar range to the piccolo.

Their repertoire is solidly based on the traditional songs of the Salento area, which means that they touch into tarantella and pizzica rhythms with *Tarentella Del Gargano* the most exciting of these. There are also mod-

ern compositions, several of which are their own. Generally these deal with pressing local issues including the depopulation of the Puglia region, which has cropped up on a number of recent releases from this part of the world. Elsewhere some of the songs take on a slower, more sombre mood, with the changes in programming managed very skilfully.

Their link to the Puglia tradition has been stressed but there are other elements that go into this mix, including from their north (chansonniers), their west (fado) and their east – the Balkans and Turkey.

crepusculeprod.com

Vic Smith

THEA GILMORE

Small World Turning Shameless SHAME 19001

After several albums exploring a variety of musical pastures, Thea Gilmore returns to her folk roots with *Small World Turning* – and what an album of brilliant, classy, exceptional contemporary folk she has given us here.

The breathtaking beauty in her vocals combines with equally breathtaking musicianship from the supporting cast. The now twenty, thirty and early forty-somethings who make up latter-day folk royalty, the likes of Cara Dillon, Seth and Sam Lakeman, Ciaran Algar and more, line up to back Gilmore on the album.

Moreover, Gilmore's writing is as sharply perceptive as her voice is enchanting. While some stabs at modern folk addressing contemporary themes can end up coming across a little jarring and contrived in their execution, Gilmore's vocals are so perfect and so natural and so unforced that that even when she's singing about foodbanks or Jägerbombs it's delivered with the same timeless eloquence as if she were singing about shapeshifting demons or the peasants' revolt.

To my mind one of the best folk albums released this year so far. Gilmore holds up a spotlight to the modern world while embracing the storytelling and musical traditions of the past and bottling up that spirit of defiance and resilience that has kept the best folk music alive across many generations.

theagilmore.net

Darren Johnson

JUMBO VANRENEN from Page 59

In 1986 World music was on mainstream radio and in the press, in a way that now we can only long for. The term hadn't yet been coined, but there was co-operation between all the labels involved and a spirit of inclusiveness that Vanrenen was very much a part of. As Lu Edmonds says, "He was a pioneer, one of the people who actually made things happen. He brought all this music into the UK and co-operated with people in Europe and beyond to make stuff happen. He reached out."

Vanrenen and Herman both attended the now legendary meeting of all the interested parties at the Empress of Russia in June 1987. Stuart Lyon was one of the promoters present that evening. "Well," he says, "I'd gone along with Susanne Fitzgerald, who was press officer for WOMAD at the time. She went upstairs and was part of that momentous meeting, and I stayed in downstairs in the bar. And that's when they came up with the term World Music..." "It was a label," says Iain Scott, who'd found his way upstairs, "that, having served my time as a manager at Our Price, I could see working well."

In 1987 Vanrenen received an offer from Island to run their Mango records label. And whilst he remained on good terms with Herman (who later took Earthworks to Sterns when Virgin sold to EMI), the offer from Chris Blackwell's office was too good to refuse. Suzette Newman recalls: "I think it was Groucho (Island's legendary producer Paul 'Groucho' Smykle) who said that Jumbo would be the perfect person to run Mango. And of course he was. He fitted in perfectly."

Vanrenen ran Mango until 2003, bringing our attention to a host of extraordinary artists, including Baaba Maal, Angélique Kidjo, Los Van Van, Khaled, Ketama, Ray Lema and Rachid Taha. "It was an incredible time," says Newman. "He had an impeccable taste in music and he was a special guy."

Vanrenen returned to South Africa in 2003 to look after his mum. Joe Menell, who co-directed the 1997 Oscar-nominated Palm Pictures documentary *Mandela (Son of Africa, Father Of A Nation)* and with whom Vanrenen would stay in Cape Town, remembers, "Jumbo DJ'd at a family 21st birthday party. He got everyone up and dancing – people of all ages and different colours. He often DJ'd at parties and everyone would dance to cumbia, the beat would get them and it would segue into something they'd never heard before, like Pakistani qawwali. He held people, that was his genius, he wasn't sucked into one thing."

As Vanrenen said, "I followed the struggle in Nicaragua and all other places in the world where people fought against oppression in some way or another and got interested in that wherever it came from." But it wasn't just that. Wherever it came from it was the music that he loved, and that he shared with a passion that inspired so many.

Donald 'Jumbo' Vanrenen: June 6th 1949 – November 18th 2018

