

f300TS

Local Music From Out There



yasmin
levy

natacha
atlas



For our 300th issue, fRoots sorts out the middle east

PICCOLA BANDA IKONA

Marea Cu Sarea Finisterre FTCD43

Musician and composer Stefano Saletti has been involved with some diverse musical projects. He has composed for film soundtracks, TV and film; written a suite based on *Le Bateau Ivre* by Arthur Rimbaud and collaborated with numerous musicians and ensembles. His latest project, *Marea Cu Sarea*, is performed by his ensemble Piccola Banda Ikona, although with eight members and a few guest musicians it is not that small.



The material is mostly composed by Saletti, but the lyrics are largely in the seafaring lingua franca named Sabir, which is a mixture of Spanish, Italian, French and Arabic and was used by sailors, pirates, fishermen, merchants and ship owners. *Marea Cu Sarea* is a Romanian proverb that literally translates as "to promise the sea with all its salt" (i.e. to pledge the impossible).

One exception to the Sabir lyrics is the opening song *Elee*, where the words are in Aramaic. This track is seven minutes of intense pleasure. It opens with Saletti's oud over a slowly pulsing drone and is then joined by Carlo Cossu's undulating fiddle and then by the glorious melismatic singing of Barbara Eramo and Ramya. The song gradually builds with Gabriele Coen's soprano saxophone and Leo Cesari's percussion in a rich-textured arrangement.

The album continues with beautifully detailed settings, combining influences from Southern Italy, Arabic, Balkan, Greek and Sephardic cultures; occasionally introducing some more contemporary rhythms and styles. There is even an Arabic-flavoured instrumental version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *My Favourite Things*. There is equal variety to the mood of the pieces. *Fuori Di Me* is a spacious jazz-tinged reflective song, *Sabir* combines reggae flavour with Arabic melody and *Famu Chiovere Sali* is an intense, slow-tempo song with lots of instrumental detail and inventive bass lines from Mario Rivera.

This is a wonderful album where all the diverse styles all integrate wonderfully. The only occasions when they tug apart are on *Opsada* (which still has some fine moments and an interesting saxophone solo) and on the restrictive electronic beats of the remix of *Marea Cu Sarea*.

www.finisterre.it, www.piccola-bandaikona.it

Michael Hingston