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## Piccola Banda Ikona Marea Cu Sarea

Finisterre FTCD43

Full Price (56 mins)



### Old seadogs keep their promises



*Sabir* is a seafaring *lingua franca* once spoken in Mediterranean ports. On this release, the follow-

up to Piccola Banda Ikona's stunning debut album from 2005, it becomes a metaphor for encounters and intermingling between peoples and cultures. Composer and multi-instrumentalist Stefano Saletti (on *bouzouki*, *oud*, *baglama*, guitars, piano, percussion and programming) is the main man behind the project, bringing in such prominent names of Italy's world music scene as bassist Mario Rivera, wind instrument player Gabriele Coen, violinist Carlo Cossu, plus vocalists Barbara Eramo and Ramya. The CD's title is derived from a Romanian saying that translates as 'to promise the sea with all its salt' – that is, to make a promise you can't keep. Here, however, the promise of an album that blends diverse Mediterranean traditional melodies, modes and timbres into a syncretic whole is kept.

The opener 'Elee', sung in Aramaic, and the title-track set the tone with mesmeric textures of assorted strings, contemporary electronics, and warm, impassioned female voices. Present-day tragedies are narrated in 'Anpalagan', a song about voyaging migrants drowned off the coast of Sicily in 1996, while both 'Fuori di me' and 'Opsada' recall the Bosnian civil war. 'Famu Chiovere Sali' adapts a Sicilian traditional poem, the silky atmospheres of 'Sabir' are built up along a Jewish-Yemenite melody and 'Benda Benda' is based on a 16th-century Spanish *villancico* written in *sabir*. The standard 'My Favorite Things' is charmingly proffered with a Middle Eastern tinge. A further cover follows – Domenico Modugno's classic 'Amara Terra Mia' – but is invested with Eramo and Ramya's vocal finesse. A trance-like reshuffling of the title-track by DJ Ominostanco ends this work. It's a great accomplishment.

Ciro De Rosa »