

RANGO *Bride of the Zar* UK PRESS: CD REVIEWS



SONGLINES MAGAZINE



“Music that penetrates the bones like an X-ray”
“An album of huge variety, energy and depth”

Rango is the name of a wooden xylophone and of a tradition that stretches back to Sudanese tribal culture, to forgotten languages and the cryptic liturgy embedded in the cult of the zar. It's a ritual trance ceremony believed to cleanse the soul and relieve suffering – a form of therapy by way of tambura, simsimiyya (lyre) and, of course, the rango, instead of a psychiatrist's chair. *Bride of the Zar* follows on from a thrilling EP released last autumn to coincide with the Rango tour. Anyone who saw their gig at the Transcender Weekender in London will know how hypnotic, entrancing and often wildly ebullient a musical spectacle it is. This is music that penetrates the bones like an X-ray. The rango, played by Hassan Bergamon from Ismailia in Egypt, has bulbous gourd resonators under the wooden keys, reputedly inhabited by the spirits of the Rango masters who previously played them. The only three such instruments known to exist are each at least 150 years old, and Bergamon is the last living master of a fascinating and truly magical tradition that all but died out almost 40 years ago. A haunted, heavyweight tambura rhythm opens the album as Bergamon gravely appeals to the zar spirits, so they might manifest themselves through the powerful vibrations of the strings. On 'Holeela', befeathered frontman TuTu plugs in a gloriously frenetic electric simsimiyya, while turbo-charged singer Sheikha Zanieb sandblasts the studio mics with a zar song about the suffering of women on 'Free Mind'. Revealing of both the social and sacred traditions of rango, it's an album of huge variety, energy and depth.

****Tim Cumming

Published in Songlines Magazine Issue 68 June 2010



“Electrified sound as heard in Cairo's Sudanese quarter ”

Deep, trance-like Rango may be from Egypt but they play music brought in by 19th-century Sudanese immigrants. The group is named after a xylophone instrument with phallic resonating gourds. Rango player Hassan Bergamon is the last of his kind. The music was played for healing ceremonies called zar and the woman on whom it was focused — the “bride of the zar” — often went into trance. Other tracks feature the electrified sound as heard in Cairo's Sudanese quarter. With bluesy vocals, plucked tanbura, vibrant percussion and funky rango, this music is so powerful the Egyptian studio feared they might get possessed by spirits.

****Simon Broughton **Published in the London Evening Standard Friday 30 April 2010**



“Witty and life-affirming”

The voodoo party brew of Sudanese/Egyptian collective Rango, *Bride Of The Zar* (30IPS) is a fabulously irreverent, vivacious collection, with highlights including *Major* (which transforms a military march into a frisky rhythm), the jubilation of *Henna Night* and *Baladia Wey*.

The songs bring together rabble-rousing exhortations (mostly delivered by the band’s frontman/dancer TuTu), Islamic traditions, folk superstitions and nostalgic melodies: it’s a deeply unusual yet witty and life-affirming blend.

Arwa Haider **Published in Metro 23 April 2010**



“Polyrhythmic explosions of love, possession and pure joy”

CD of the Week

Rango, led by Hassan Bergamon, delve into their sacred, magical repertoire as well as music from street weddings and half-remembered Sudanese army songs. *Bride of the Zar* (a magico-healing ceremony) delivers a wide palette of sounds, which range from a slave’s entreaty to old gods, to polyrhythmic explosions of love, possession and pure joy.

Tim Cumming

Published in The Independent 1 May 2010

The Daily Telegraph

“Leaves you itching to hear this live”

Based around a 190-year-old xylophone through which spirits are believed to manifest themselves when played, this Sudanese trance music has a spacey, elemental drive reminiscent of cult Congolese sound system Konono No1. The tumbling syncopations playing off against grinding amplified pharaonic harps and hyped up voices create a mood of mass exaltation that leaves you itching to hear this live.

****Mark Hudson Published in The Daily Telegraph 8 May 2010

FINANCIAL TIMES

“An intent trance”

Once, all the best Nubian weddings resounded to the rango, a vintage wooden xylophone with gourd resonators. But with the rise of DJs playing Arabic pop, the instrument fell into disuse. Rango, the group, are reviving it, under the hammers of its last surviving player, Hassan Bergamon. *Bride Of The Zar* sets the rango against the Egyptian lute, the simsimiyya, and clouds of percussion. The album passes in an intent trance, with truculent songs of the Sudanese in Egyptian exile, culminating in an erotic wedding dance.

****David Honigman Published in The Financial Times 24 April 2010

THE INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

“Irresistibly cheerful”

A zar is a healing ceremony, traditionally practiced by women in Egypt; in neighbouring Sudan, it's been officially proscribed because the tanbura is seen as socially subversive.

Rango denotes the nine-member collective supporting Hassan Bergamon, the sole surviving player of this instrument, which he learnt to play clandestinely, gradually developing the repertoire we hear here. The songs all follow a call-and-response structure, and the music is rough hewn, but the atmosphere is irresistibly cheerful.

Michael Church Published in The Independent On Sunday 8 August 2010