

per, while their glorious close harmonies on *Maggie* suggest that long-promised unaccompanied album should be a corker. *The Poor Stranger* also deflects the album's big moments, its informality suggesting Rachel has just got up to sing at the back of a folk club over McNally's plinkety-plonk piano.

The Unthanks have always played by their own rules, but the leap they've taken here is formidable even by their standards. A serious work that merits serious attention.

www.the-unthanks.com

Colin Irwin

SO III

Muuttonaurujen Parvia Suvi Sounds
SUVISCD04



Finnish fiddler Suvi Oskala has an admirable musical pedigree in her homeland, including a degree in folk music from the Sibelius Academy. Her solo and group work had wandered far and wide musically, but with the trio SO III she's definitely hit the bullseye.

Oskala plays a five-string fiddle, giving greater range and depth to the music, and sings, along with Oskari Lehtonen (percussion and vocals) and Teemu Korpiää on live electronics. The songs are all original, with lyrics by the Finnish poet Saija Nojonen. The debt to Finnish folk is there, not only in the 'ditty' song *Näkinkenä*, which bounces merrily along in the traditional manner, but also in the dark undertones that inhabit many of the tracks, reminiscent at times of the bold music of early Hedningarna. It's a very spare disc, with fiddle and voices offering the only melody, but it's still incredibly rich. Harmonies layer to create sounds that range from nightingale to banshee. It's definitely a journey to another world, where fiddle lulls or drives. It's definitely the lead of the band, but the other two work so deftly and subtly that the way they fill out the sound seems completely organic. Whether the arrangements are plotted or have simply developed, it's masterful. More than atmospheric, it's a disc that arrives straight out of left field and proceeds to dance through winding mazes, then over the hills and far away. The joy of it is that the music here stands outside of everything, deliciously alien (although a couple of moments offer faint echoes of Björk at her best, which is no bad thing).

SO III



Photo: Sami Perttälä

It's probably a Marmite record, love it or hate it, but it packs more adventure and fire into its seven tracks than many musicians manage in an entire career. Utterly bloody wonderful.

www.suivoskala.net

Chris Nickson

YIDDISH TWIST ORCHESTRA

Let's! Bergmanton Twist Series YTOCD0039



YTO have been plying their cool, crazy and kosher combination of Jewish, Caribbean, Latin and vintage rock'n'roll influences around London's finer dives for a few years now. In fact, I must declare an interest here. I DJed for them a few times and wrote about them for this very mag a few years back. Not that I've heard anything from them recently (they don't write, they don't phone), perhaps they've been too busy working on this their debut album. Featuring some of the UK's finest players including Friend of Mustapha Ben Mandelson, saxman David Bitelli and Robin Harris on Hammond organ, all topped off with vocals from Ska Cubano frontman Natty Bo on seven of the twelve tracks, *Let's* offers up an alternative universe of 50 years ago, where London's working community of Jewish musicians mixed the rocking sounds they played in late-night dives with the Yiddisher tunes they performed at weddings and bar mitzvahs.

So, their version of that old Jewish musical standard *Mazl* clearly bears the influence of the Ravens' early '50s doo-wop reading; there's a twangy, jazzy take on *The Internationale* and inevitably, a Slim Gaillard tune (*Mishugana Mambo*, a new one on me). There are a couple of originals thrown in too: the self-explanatory *Let's Yiddish Twist* and the pleasingly lascivious *Shake Your Tukhus*.

Here's a band who are free of pretensions though the overriding good humour and sense of fun in no way detract from the fine playing and smart arrangements on offer and Natty Bo certainly knows how to put over a song. *Let's Yiddish twist!*

www.yiddishtwist.com

Jamie Renton

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