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**Reviewers: Tony Augarde [Editor], Steve Arloff, Nick Barnard, Pierre Giroux, Don Mather, Glyn Pursglove, George Stacy, Sam Webster, Jonathan Woolf**



**SPYRO GYRA**

*A Foreign Affair*

● **Amherst AMH 6611-2**

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1. Caribe
2. Khuda
3. Sweet Ole Thang
4. Falling Walls
5. Shinjuku
6. Chileno Boys
7. Samba for Two
8. Canção de Ninar
9. Antigua
10. Last Call
11. Dancing on Table Mountain

Jay Beckenstein - Saxes  
 Tom Schuman - Keyboards  
 Julio Fernandez - Guitars, vocals  
 Scott Ambush - Bass  
 Bonny B - Drums, percussion, vocals  
 Keb' Mo' - Vocals (track 10)  
 Arijit Singh - Vocals (track 2)  
 Sandeep Chowta - Strings, duduk samples, tabla programming (track 2)  
 Pedrito Martinez - Congas

Gerard Hoffnung Concerts

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Tosin Aribjsala - Percussion (track 11)

When I was at school, Spyrogyra was the name for a mysterious creature we heard about in biology lessons, without knowing quite what it was. Spyro Gyra is a group that might be called a "one-hit wonder", as (in the UK at least) they have only had one hit with *Morning Dance* in 1979. They have continued together since then and spend much of their time touring the world. This gave them the idea for this album, showing how world music has influenced their sound.

In fact I didn't realise what the CD was about when I first listened to it, as it just seemed to be the sort of smooth jazz we have come to expect from Spyro Gyra, with Jay Beckenstein's saxophone still the dominant voice in the band - and one of its major attractions. Yet I had noticed some influences in various tracks, such as the reggae beat (emphasis on the third beat of the bar) in the opening *Caribe*. There is also an obvious Indian feel to *Khuda*, with vocals delivering lyrics in Hindi. Here and elsewhere, Beckenstein's soprano sax adds an exotic oriental timbre.

The sound of steel drums on *Sweet Ole Thang* returns us to the Caribbean mood - and they contribute to an attractive sound reminiscent of the catchy *Morning Dance*. Guitarist Julio Fernandez is featured on the funky *Falling Walls*, which has a Middle Eastern atmosphere. Julio sings *Chileno Boys*, which takes us to Mexico, while *Shinjuku* is in Japanese vein.

*Samba For Two* and *Canção de Ninar* use Brazilian rhythms: the former having a charming rhythm, while the latter sounds a bit like *Mr Wonderful* to me! *Antigua* refers seductively to a World Heritage city in Guatemala, and Keb' Mo' sings *Last Call* with a poignant late-night aura. The closing *Dancing on Table Mountain* hasn't got the expected South African feel but is simply a pleasant jazz-fusion outing.

Spyro Gyra continues to make music which is likable even if it is not particularly profound.

**Tony Augarde**

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