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## Morocco Fantasia

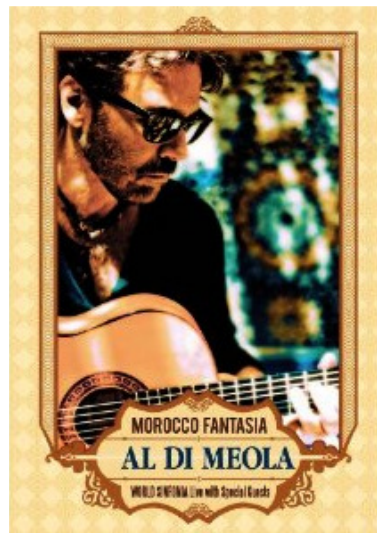
directed by Claus Altvater and Al Di Meola

starring Al Di Meola

Inakustik

I'm a little scared about writing this review; the legal warnings opening this disc were enough to scare me out of the business. I could do time in a Moroccan prison for "diffusing" Al Di Meola's performance, so if you think you might enjoy this spirited collection, for goodness sake, don't tell anyone you heard it from me. I'm not even sure what "diffusion" is.

But whatever the definition, Di Meola makes a complex, purist Jazz full of complex rhythms, weird chords, and subtle melodies with the sort of concentration usually associated with, say, bomb disposal or neurosurgery. This concert takes him to Rabat, Morocco, where he dresses in Sufi white and zones out playing more notes in a minute than I could hear in an hour. Backing him we discover an accordion (Fausto Beccalossi) a percussionist (Gumbi Ortiz) and a drummer (Peter Kaszas) along with a pair of guitarists (Peo Alfonsi and Victor Miranda). There's a weird little digital doohickey



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on the neck of Di Meola's guitar, and his whole orchestra looks like it's tripping on sunshine, even as they keep perfectly to his lead.

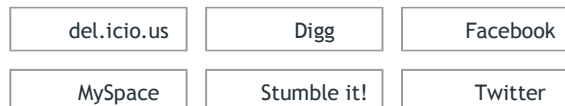
Behind them are large blue corn chips painted by a presumably local artist, and when the band isn't squinting at the densest musical scores I've ever seen, we flash to scenes of the picturesque back alleys and bazaars of the ancient city. This concert dates from 2009, so a few things may have changed politically over there, but I hope the Mawazine Musique du Monde Festival is still around, if only for its amazing name. The music here is fluid and interrelated. "Double Concerto" has a French flair and "Michelangelo's 7th Child" feels busy as a flustered mother keeping house for a dissolute husband. "Gumbiero" features percussion guy showing off modestly on Congas while we cut to local video of young children doing similarly rhythmic things.

The extras on the disc are worth the time as well. There are rehearsals and sound checks (yawn), but soon Di Meola heads out into the street and jams with some locals on the street corner. It's half world beat, half cool jazz, and thoroughly enjoyable. In another cut, Di Meola heads up to the roof and picks out an acoustic number while his camera man fills in with the more roof shots as Di Meola perches atop a small dome of his own. "Mawazine Suit 1-4" takes us back on stage, same set, but a set of different musicians accompany, including Abdellah Meri on violin and Said Chraibi on Oud. These players are the crème of the jazz crop and with decades of experience, Di Meola and his accompanists show just how Jazz works and how smoothly it blends in with other styles to form a seamless whole. It's worth the risk to take a listen.

Inakustik: [www.in-akustik.de](http://www.in-akustik.de)

Carl F Gauze

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