

apparently not. Work on number 33 is already in progress.

SIMON BROUGHTON

TRACK TO TRY *Epic Song* *Ion al Florilor*

Écorce Cordé Serré

Écorce (41 mins)

★★★★★

Québec's Celtic heritage



Celtic communities have helped to shape Québec's heritage and, whether of Breton, Cornish, Scottish,

Welsh, Irish or Mannian origin, most Québécois of European descent share a Celtic connection. A shared passion for traditional music from Québec and the countries that forged it brought François Matte (Irish flute, tin whistle, *bodhrán*, vocals) and Jean-Sébastien Gasnier (guitar, mandola, vocals) to form Écorce in 2017, drawing on 20 years of experience on the local music scene to take part as a duo in that year's Festival Celtique de Québec. Since that debut, they've performed separately and together at festivals and workshops around Québec, developing an impressive repertoire of original songs and adaptations of unknown gems.

Their first album *Cordé Serré*, produced by the duo and self-released, marks a new lease of life for the project, adding some well-known guests from the traditional music industry, including pianist Rachel Aucoin, vocalist Gabrielle Bouthillier and violinist Louis-Simon Lemieux, to help craft a sprightly, humorous and invigorating album of tunes from the richly-textured tradition *tant celtique que québécoise* (both Celtic and Quebec), alongside four tracks written by the multi-instrumentalist duo.

KEVIN BOURKE

TRACK TO TRY *Sara Vigote*

Firelight Trio Firelight Trio

Firelight Trio (72 mins)

★★★★★

A whirlwind folk trip around the continent



A new trio featuring accordionist Phil Alexander (Moishe's Bagel), renowned Scottish

fiddle player Gavin Marwick and Ruth Morris on the Swedish *nyckelharpa*, Firelight Trio's first album together is a rich and diverse mixture of European music. The eponymous album covers everything from skittish Swedish *polskas* and Scottish reels to lilting French waltzes and joyful jigs, from lively klezmer tunes to a lovely, sad remembrance of the fallen from the cataclysmic World War I battle at Passchendaele.

The eclectic nature of this exceptional record is evident right from the off, as 'Chasen Senem', which comes from the repertoire of Romanian-born *cimbalom* player Joseph Moskowicz, leads into two tunes from Marwick's (by all accounts extensive) *Horizons* tune collection, the sardonic 'Filthy Lucre' and 'The Latvian's March', a celebration of Latvia declaring independence from the Soviet Union, before the pell-mell 'En Charrette / The Last Minute' propels us across to France – and so on. This could actually all be a bit exhausting were it not so evocative and enchanting, a tribute to the obvious love and admiration the three have not only for the music but for each other. I'd be willing to bet that Firelight Trio will be a hoot live, after they launch this collection at Celtic Connections.

KEVIN BOURKE

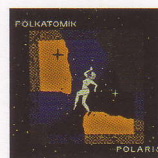
TRACK TO TRY *Chasen Senem / Filthy Lucre / The Latvian's March*

Folkatomik Polaris

Italysona (40 mins)

★★★★★

Italian electro-folk quartet



Turin-dwelling musicians of southern Italian descent (Oreste Forestieri, Franco Montanaro and

Valeria Quarta), delve into traditional forms from the southern regions of the Boot, combining vocals, percussion, wind instruments and plucked strings with electronica mastered by the DJ-producer Daniele Li Bassi to create a unique soundscape. Polaris, the North Star, is 'the star guiding an ever-changing route,' the quartet declare, as they craft song and dance to bring them to a younger and more urban audience.

The opening title-track commands instant interest – a *pizzica* sung in Calabrian dialect where a castaway on the open sea pleads to the star for help finding his way back home. The powerful 'Quant'ave' immediately grabs and holds you, it's another *pizzica* given a Latin makeover. Following a borderless attitude, the instrumental part of 'Tirullallero', a Calabrian *tarantella*, receives a *rebetika* ambience whereas a glorious electronic groove pervades 'Tammuriata'. Elsewhere, 'Lu Trainu' is a Balkan-flavoured traditional Sicilian carter's song while 'Tira la Pinna', whose lyrics are ascribed to a XIX century Calabrian highwayman, results in an unexpected tango mood. In their journey, they pay homage to Salento traditional classics with 'Pizzica di Torchiardo' and the closing reggae-inflected 'Pizzica di San Vito', featuring superb mandolin lines. A captivating folktronica offering, bursting with ideas and energy.

CIRO DE ROSA

TRACK TO TRY *Quant'ave*

Gipsy Kings Tonino Baliardo Renaissance

Wienerworld (38 mins)

★★★★★

The Gipsy King returns to claim his crown



Tonino Baliardo, one of the founding members of Gipsy Kings, is back with his first album in more

than eight years. Aptly titled, *Renaissance* burns bright with the passion of a revival. The album came about when Baliardo was forced into hiatus due to the lockdown after 30 years of touring the world. The upshot was an opportunity to relax with his family in Montpellier and compose some new songs. These compositions would become *Renaissance*.

As one might expect, the album fuses flamenco and pop with sumptuous dashes of salsa and hints of classical. The spirit is good vibes, beach sunsets and plaza flamenco parties peppered with moments of introspection. It's highly danceable for the most part. Baliardo's playing is on point; fast, fiery and full of intensity with enough tenderness to melt hearts. The singers in Gipsy Kings Tonino Baliardo deliver the goods with the grit and unfiltered emotion of a backstreet flamenco bar, yet enough silkiness to woo the pop crowds. *Renaissance* is like returning to a much-loved Mediterranean destination after several years and bumping into an old flame. All in all, this album sees Tonino Baliardo doing what he does best.

DAN HOBSON

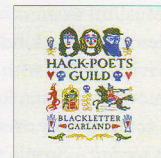
TRACK TO TRY *Volando*

Hack-Poets Guild Blackletter Garland

One Little Independent (49 mins)

★★★★★

An alternative and innovative folk offering from trio



The Hack-Poets Guild are Marry Waterson, Lisa Knapp and composer and sound designer

Nathaniel Mann. Working with Sound UK Arts, they were invited to Oxford's Bodleian Library to draw from original 18th- and 19th-century broadsheet ballads collected and donated by one-time music hall pianist Walter Harding – in their time they were sold for a penny, and were ▶



Daniele Li Bassi

Folkatomik