

• R E V I E W S •



Relativity

RELATIVITY *Gathering Pace* Green Linnet SIF 1076

For those that have been off the planet for a while, Relativity combines the fearsome talents of the O Domhnaill family (Triona & Micheál) and the Cunningham family (John & Phil). Take a wealth of instrumental talent together with Triona's unique vocals. Mix in fiddle, accordion and clavinet with some of the most impressive electronic keyboard arrangements I've heard. Use to arrange traditional and contemporary tune sets with Gaelic songs. Result – a superbly satisfying concoction.

There's music for all tastes here. The lush, slow Cunningham airs (*Ceol Anna* and *When She Sleeps*) work especially well with the enhanced instrumentation. The title track contrasts a superb Elton John piano arrangement with some vocal pyrotechnics from Triona Ni Domhnaill (on the only song with English lyrics). *Rosc Catha Na Mumhan* has some almost ethereal vocals mixed with a 1970s raunchy backing that reminds me of the King Crimson/Blodwyn Pig era. Sort of *21st Century Schizoid Gael* if you know what I mean. There's also some more conventional tune sets (mainly Cunningham inspired), including a rework of Phil's *Hogtie's Reel* complete with drummers from the Black Watch!

Seriously though, their first album was going to be a hard act to follow, but follow it they certainly have. The LP is similar in style, yet shows a marked progression – the sound is more dense in some ways, and uses keyboards most inventively as a foil to Phil's accordion and Triona's percussive clavinet. The whole thing shows just how 'folk' musicians can produce top quality contemporary music while staying true to their roots. Superb stuff.

Bob Walton

Those of you who heard the devastating Kandia Kouyate in the course of Radio 3's recent *Music Of The Royal Courts* broadcasts or at Bracknell will have an idea of the vocal style and indeed one of her only serious rivals – we're talking here of vocal prowess so famed that patrons shower the artists with gifts like houses, cars and even aeroplanes! In terms of range, dynamics, control, decoration, tone, lungpower, and the ability to generate emotional radiation which causes your goosepimples to mutate, these women have few equals!

The four beautiful pieces on this LP are accompanied by another acclaimed Malian musician, the acoustic guitarist Bouba Sacko, with both violin and balafon double-tracked by Keletigui Diabate, and the traditional *ngoni* (small lute) provided by Moriba Koita. The violin in particular adds a unique, seemingly experimental flavour to the music, whilst whoever produced the recording had a few interesting tricks up their sleeves as well – there are some under-stated but enormously effective vocal echo effects here and there. The end product is thus of a traditional music of great power and beauty, but played by musicians who are not afraid to harness the modern world for what benefits it can offer. A Malian equivalent of the Tabor/Cronshaw partnership, for example.

Converts of Jali Musa Jawara, Ousmane Sacko and Ali Farka Toure should need nil persuasion to add this to your collections and discover how, in Malian vocal circles as well as most other worldwide walks of life, the women generally have the upper hand!

I.A.A.

DANNY THOMPSON *Whatever* Hannibal HNBL 1326



Amy Koita

greater or lesser prominence, through much of the LP. None of this is any bad thing and it all provides quite an enjoyable listen.

I've no idea of the composed/improvised ratio, but the musicianship exudes assurance and togetherness without ever lapsing into mere sterile proficiency. The instrumental colour is quite well varied given the small line-up which, although drum-free, has no trouble at all in sustaining rhythmic impetus. The use of Northumbrian pipes in this type of musical context is particularly interesting. Roberts making them seem just as much at home as the sax and flute – you start to wonder why it isn't done more often.

The music flows easily and I've tended to listen to it as a near-seamless whole rather than as a collection of individual pieces, so wouldn't attempt to single out any track for praise or blame (not that the latter is applicable). The lasting impression is of a thoroughly accomplished and agreeable record not, despite some of the foregoing, readily categorised. Really it's a case of three people drawing on their diverse experience in the service of others to make something new of their own – this particular bunch of 'old session men' are far from jaded.

Nick Beale

VARIOUS ARTISTS *W.O.M.A.D. Talking Book – Asia 1* (WOMAD 006)

ALAAP *Nach Mundeya* Multitone MUT 1035 (cassette CMUT 1035)

ALAAP *Teri Chunni De Sitare* Multitone MUT 1008 (cassette CMUT 1008)

PREMI *Nachdi Di Gooth Khulgaye* Multitone MUT 1034 (cassette CMUT 1034)

VARIOUS ARTISTS *Bhangra Fever* Arishma ARI 0105 (cassette)

The format of WOMAD's exemplary *Talking Book*