

RANGO: Bride of the Zar CD Reviews / Live at WOMAD Abu Dhabi Press links and quotes as of 03/05/10

01. Songlines Issue 68

Top of The World Album

<http://www.songlines.co.uk/topoftheworld/top-of-the-world.php>

“Music that penetrates the bones like an X-ray...an album of huge variety, energy and depth”

Rango is the name of a wooden xylophone and of a tradition that stretches back to Sudanese tribal culture, to forgotten languages and the cryptic liturgy embedded in the cult of the zar. It's a ritual trance ceremony believed to cleanse the soul and relieve suffering – a form of therapy by way of tambura, simsimiyya (lyre) and, of course, the rango, instead of a psychiatrist's chair. *Bride of the Zar* follows on from a thrilling EP released last autumn to coincide with the Rango tour. Anyone who saw their gig at the Transcender Weekender in London will know how hypnotic, entrancing and often wildly ebullient a musical spectacle it is. This is music that penetrates the bones like an X-ray. The rango, played by Hassan Bergamon from Ismaïlia in Egypt, has bulbous gourd resonators under the wooden keys, reputedly inhabited by the spirits of the Rango masters who previously played them. The only three such instruments known to exist are each at least 150 years old, and Bergamon is the last living master of a fascinating and truly magical tradition that all but died out almost 40 years ago. A haunted, heavyweight tambura rhythm opens the album as Bergamon gravely appeals to the zar spirits, so they might manifest themselves through the powerful vibrations of the strings. On 'Holeela', befeathered frontman TuTu plugs in a gloriously frenetic electric simsimiyya, while turbo-charged singer Sheikha Zanieb sandblasts the studio mics with a zar song about the suffering of women on 'Free Mind'. Revealing of both the social and sacred traditions of rango, it's an album of huge variety, energy and depth.

02. Metro

<http://www.metro.co.uk/metrolife/music/822954-music-extra-africa-beats-with-diversity>

“Witty and life-affirming”

“Rabble-rousing exhortations”

First up, the voodoo party brew of Sudanese/Egyptian collective Rango. **Bride Of The Zar (30IPS)** is a fabulously irreverent, vivacious collection, with highlights including Major (which transforms a military march into a frisky rhythm), the jubilation of Henna Night and Baladia Wey.

The songs bring together rabble-rousing exhortations (mostly delivered by the band's frontman/dancer TuTu), Islamic traditions, folk superstitions and nostalgic melodies: it's a deeply unusual yet witty and life-affirming blend.

03. Financial Times ****

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/89c8ef0e-4c46-11df-8fe1-00144feab49a.html>

“An intent trance, with truculent songs of the Sudanese in Egyptian exile”

Once, all the best Nubian weddings resounded to the rango, a vintage wooden xylophone with gourd resonators. But with the rise of DJs playing Arabic pop, the instrument fell into disuse. Rango, the group, are reviving it, under the hammers of its last surviving player, Hassan Bergamon.

Bride Of The Zar sets the rango against the Egyptian lute, the simsimiyya, and clouds of percussion. The album passes in an intent trance, with truculent songs of the Sudanese in Egyptian exile, culminating in an erotic wedding dance.

04. Independent On Sunday

<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/reviews/album-rango-bride-of-the-zar-voodoo-rhythm-1954056.html>

“The frenetic rattle of an array of percussion instruments produce a bustling, involving backdrop”

The dry, muted sound of the tanbura and the frenetic rattle of an array of percussion instruments (including the wooden xylophone from which this Egyptian/Sudanese collective gets its name) produce a bustling, involving backdrop for the sonorous call-and-response vocals.

But what really makes this outfit stand out is the fact that the five-stringed simsimiyya has been fitted with an electric pickup which subtly adds a smidgen of funky distortion to what is otherwise a fairly traditional sound.

05. London Evening Standard – Rango Bride of the Zar CD review

<http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/music/article-23829785-cds-of-the-wee-hole-and-diana-vickers.do>

“Electrified sound as heard in Cairo's Sudanese quarter”

“Bluesy vocals, plucked tanbura, vibrant percussion and funky rango”

Deep, trance-like Rango may be from Egypt but they play music brought in by 19th-century Sudanese immigrants. The group is named after an xylophone instrument with phallic resonating gourds. Rango player Hassan Bergamon is the last of his kind. The music was played for healing ceremonies called zar and the woman on whom it was focused — the “bride of the zar” — often went into trance. Other tracks feature the electrified sound as heard in Cairo's Sudanese quarter. With bluesy vocals, plucked tanbura, vibrant percussion and funky rango, this music is so powerful the Egyptian studio feared they might get possessed by spirits.

06. The Independent – The Information Guide

CD of the Week

“Polyrhythmic explosions of love, possession and pure joy”

Rango, led by Hassan Bergamon, delve into their sacred, magical repertoire as well as music from street weddings and half-remembered Sudanese army songs. Bride of the Zar (a magico-healing ceremony) delivers a wide palette of sounds, which range from a slave's entreaty to old gods, to polyrhythmic explosions of love, possession and pure joy.

07. The National – UAE, Rango Feature

<http://www.thenational.ae/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20100412/ART/704119990/1007/art>

“All-out good time, hip-shaking dance music”

08. The National UAE – WOMAD Abu Dhabi review

<http://www.thenational.ae/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20100425/NATIONAL/704249830&SearchID=73388847674412>

09. Songlines – WOMAD Abu Dhabi review

<http://www.songlines.co.uk/world-music-news/2010/04/womad-festival-abu-dhabi-2010/>

“The stars of the weekend, however, were Rango, Cairo-based Sudanese desert musicians, whose thumping beats and outrageous frontman had the crowd jumping. The rango is an ancient, controversial, nearly lost-and-forgotten voodoo instrument now being revived by this band.”

10. Time Out Abu Dhabi – WOMAD review

<http://www.timeoutdubai.com/knowledge/news/15358-womad-abu-dhabi-review>

11. Financial Times – WOMAD Abu Dhabi 2010 review

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/e05c0b7e-532d-11df-813e-00144feab49a.html>

“Rango went down a storm”