

SONGLINES MAGAZINE



The nomadic tribes collectively known as the Bedouin have been roaming the desert regions of the Arab world for millennia and music plays a central role in their culture. Indeed, it's used for everything from tracing a stranger's family tree to encouraging reluctant camels. Anyone who has spent time amongst Bedouin will know that they are legendarily hospitable and that it doesn't require much to inspire a good party, which often revolves around the grinding and drinking of coffee – it's more fun than it sounds!

These desert-dwellers are also extraordinarily resourceful and their instruments have always been made from whatever comes to hand, be they pipes whittled from marsh reeds or drums made from the flotsam of the region's military conflicts, including the jerry cans from which the group take their name. The Bedouin Jerry Can Band's music is an infectious blend of clattering rhythms and rousing choruses, interspersed with more subtle melodies accompanied by pipes and the grainy sound of the rabab (horsehair fiddle). However, the real delight of the album is the silvery sound of the simsimiya (five-string lyre), which manages to be both electrifyingly rhythmic and enchantingly elegaic.

However, the BJB's performances are rather more smoothly produced and approachable than some other similar groups, and that is undoubtedly a good thing: this is a genre of music that is wonderful if you're in the midst of a party under the Sinai stars but can be a bewildering din on your iPod at home.

**** **BILL BADLEY** ISSUE 48 DECEMBER 2007

THE TIMES

Featuring lyres, flutes, fiddles, tablas and, of course, jerry cans scavenged from the Sinai desert after the Six Day War in 1967, this unusual collection of Bedouin folk songs has been assembled from the histories of the nomadic tribes of the Middle East. With its rapid percussion and pounding beat, it is an interesting contrast to the Tuareg desert blues, which seem designed to while away long hours alone in the saddle. The Bedouin sound more at home dancing at oasis gatherings, where they can tell each other about real hospitality, black coffee, camel trains, desert postmen and black-eyed women with green tattoos. An undeniable sense of fun flows infectiously through these songs.

*** **DAVID HUTCHEON** 7 October 2007

Evening Standard

A band of Bedouin musicians from the Sinai desert with songs about camels, coffee and beautiful girls. This fine, dozen-strong group accompany themselves on flute, rubab fiddle, the delicate simsimiyya lyre which dates back to pharaonic times plus ammunition boxes and fuel cans that date back to the Six Day War. The Bedouin are famous for their hospitality and it's easy to imagine sitting down with these guys round a fire and enjoying these rousing songs till late in the night. The track Black Coffee is particularly good in this respect and comes complete with the sound of a wooden coffee grinder. The group promises coffee at their Ramadan Nights performance at St Luke's next Tuesday. I hope they can do a version without sugar.

**** **SIMON BROUGHTON** 12 October 2007

FINANCIAL TIMES

"No Stratocasters" is the proud boast, a rebuke to all the Tinariwens and Toumasts who bring the sonic values of The Clash to the desert. Bedouin Jerry Can Band are based in the Sinai rather than the Sahara, and their signature is a cacophony of found percussion, produced by battering on ammunition boxes discarded during the Six Day War, with a top end of simsimiyya (the five-string lyre popularised by El Tanbura), pipes and wolf-skin fiddle. Songs tell of forbidden and doomed love, coffee and camels.

**** **DAVID HONIGMANN** 6 October 2007



THE SCOTSMAN

WHILE Tinariwen systematically re-tailor their art to suit commercial demands, this band of Bedouin nomads keeps the faith. They won't swap their simsimiyya lyres for guitars, and love the sound of the jerry cans they found littering the deserts. Their music is raw, atmospheric, and free of electronic "aids," and they have invited their fellow simsimiyya champions El Tanbura to join them on three tracks. The title refers to the preparation of the drink which is the focus of all Bedouin gatherings, and the lyrics reflect the basic realities of desert life - love, hospitality, and the beauty of the stars.

**** **MICHAEL CHURCH** 16 November 2007