HIGHLIFE WORLD MUSIC

MAY 2010 NEWSLETTER
1317 Commercial Drive Vancouver, BC **tel:** 604-251-6964
email: info@highlifeworld.com **web:** highlifeworld.com

2010 FAVOURITES - VOL. 1

For great new music from diverse places, concert tickets without ghastly charges, cool vintage vinyl, or searching out that hard-to-find CD or DVD, Highlife is your spot. Here is a list of our favourite albums so far this year.

SHARON JONES

I Learned The Hard Way USA

http://www.sharonjonesandthedapkings.com/

The reigning queen of retro soul has come a long way from her 70's disco roots, finding musical heaven with her Dap Kings band as they dig deeper and deeper into their 60's era Memphis soul style. On her latest, Jones refines her sound with impassioned vocals, cool backing singers and spot-on horn section, delivering a fresh brew of sonic splendour.

GOTAN PROJECT

Tango 3.0 France/Argentina

http://www.gotanproject.com/

The leading nuevo tango outfit, often imitated but never equaled, is back with a fresh take on their patented sound. Back too is sultry Catalan vocalist Christina Villalonga, as well as sundry spoken word samples, adding an atmospheric, cinematic element to this welcome return.

TONY ALLEN

Secret Agent Nigeria

http://www.tony-allen.com/

The Nigerian drum sorcerer, who co-created Afrobeat music in the late 60's with Fela Kuti, is back with this surprisingly fresh recording. Featuring the soulful vocals of Ayo on several tracks as well as a stellar horn section, this album offers many delights within its varied musical panorama.

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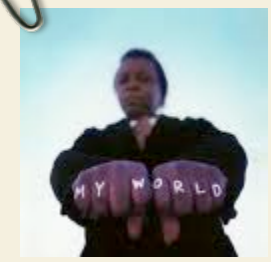

LEE FIELDS

My World USA

Recording since the 60's, making his 'comeback' in '92 (when Sharon Jones was discovered singing backup for him), Lee Fields at last hits the musical jackpot with 'My World'. With his 1971 era Stax sound, Fields proves once again that roots soul is alive and kicking.

GOGOL BORDELLO

Trans-Continental Hustle USA

http://www.gogolbordello.com/

Everybody's favourite New York multi-ethnic gypsy-punk band, whose full-throttle live shows are legendary, hooks up with producer extraordinaire Rick Rubin. Tales of immigrants' travails and existential dread get the acoustic treatment this time out, as guitars, gypsy violins and accordions add texture to the swirling soundscape, while still sounding like a pan-cultural fiesta.

PATTY GRIFFIN

Downtown Church USA

http://www.pattygriffin.com/

This beautiful new Patty Griffin release finds her teaming up with producer Buddy Miller to record a very atypical gospel album. Exploring various strands of gospel roots, from chain gang to southern ballad to Mexican folksong, this uplifting collection recalls the 'O Brother, Where Art Thou' soundtrack. Sublime!

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SALIF KEITA

La Difference Mali

http://www.myspace.com/salifkeitamusic

Recorded in Bamako, Beirut, Paris and L.A., this is a superb album by one of Africa's greatest vocalists. The brilliant mix of guitar, n'goni, trumpet, cello, oud and percussion builds a rich musical tapestry on these new and re-recorded classics.

KOTTARASHKY

Opa Hey! Bulgaria

http://www.asphalt-tango.de/records/kottarashky/

Here is a stunning meeting of timeless Balkan voices, folk instrumentation and digital technology. Based in Sofia, Bulgaria, Kottarashky's rapid-fire delivery presents us with an alluring musical landscape.

BASSEKOU KOUYATE

I Speak Fula Mali

The n'goni master, who created new versions of this ancient stringed instrument, is back with another exciting record. Led by four n'gonis and the wonderful Amy Sacko on vocals, they are joined here by Vieux Farka Toure, Toumani Diabate and others, on this essential Malian recording.

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YOUSSOU N'DOUR

Dakar-Kingston Senegal

http://www.youssou.com/

Senegal's greatest vocalist, whose pan-African focus has led to many rewarding collaborations, now heads to Jamaica's Tuff Gong studio to record with reggae legends such as Earl 'Chinna' Smith and Tyrone Downie. Partly a tribute to Bob Marley and partly a uniquely Senegalese take on reggae music, this is a far-reaching recording full of joyous musical wonder.

NNEKA

Concrete Jungle Nigeria/ Germany

http://www.nnekaworld.com/us/home

This album finds the Nigerian/German hip-hop soul artist offering up a dose of spirited consciousness over acoustic, hip-hop, reggae and soul beats by the resourceful sound shaper DJ Farhot. Nneka decries corruption in high places while giving us messages of hope, recalling Lauryn Hill, Erykah Badu and Curtis Mayfield with her Afro-centric cross-cultural outlook.

GIL SCOTT-HERON

I'm New Here USA

The 70's era soul-jazz pioneer, whose commentaries on racial politics and the state of America were so influential on hip-hop (as the numerous samples of his work demonstrate) is back after a long hiatus. Scott-Heron teams up with XL Recordings main man Richard Russell on these striking song-stories as he reflects on his own life and shortcomings, backed by gritty cinematic soundscapes.

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SMADJ

Selin Tunisia/France

Tunisian-Parisian oud player, who co-founded the group Duoud, here teams up with jazz trumpeter Erik Truffaz and tabla wizard Talvin Singh. Richly atmospheric, the recording mixes equal parts acoustic and electric elements, as if 70's era Miles Davis landed in Delhi via Istanbul.

SOUL JAZZ ORCHESTRA

Rising Sun Canada

http://www.souljazzorchorchestra.com/

After two superb Afro-beat albums, this Ottawa-based group adds a strong dose of 60's era Coltrane-tinged jazz to its funky upbeat sound, bringing together two great musical traditions. An Afro-jazz masterpiece.

THE SPY FROM CAIRO

Secretly Famous USA

Belly dance music meets Dub and Electronica on the latest by New York-based oud player/Producer Moreno Visini (AKA Zeb). Sultry Tunisian singer Ghalia Benali's vocals grace a few tracks as the Egyptian and Moroccan melodies and rhythms meet urban beats and basslines.

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ALI FARKA TOURE & TOUMANI DIABATE

Ali & Toumani Mali

This last recording of the late Malian guitar legend Ali Farka Toure in collaboration with kora maestro Toumani Diabate is a beautiful farewell to his countless fans around the world.

Aided by the great Cuban bassist Orlando 'Cachaito' Lopez (on what turned out to be his last recording too) and his son Vieux Farka Toure, the heart of these sessions lays in the magical interplay between guitar and kora on some sublime West African themes.

VAMPIRE WEEKEND

Contra USA

With its topsy-turvy rhythms incorporating everything from surf-rock to ska and African pop, to its inventive, at times delirious wordplay, Vampire Weekend have managed to carve a unique niche for their ridiculously catchy pop-rock.

Guitars, marimbas, thumb pianos, M.I.A. samples and all manner of surprising twists spice their latest concoctions, sure to put a smile on your face.