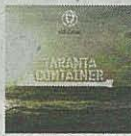


influenced by John Coltrane, whose sax marathons Ponty often seems to emulate on violin. This formidable ensemble (Philip Catherine is on guitar, Peter Warren is on bass and George Duke's Oliver Johnson on drums) can be fiercely hard-grooving and boldly exploratory. The Coltranesque manic-trance feel can seem relentless at times, but there are plenty of mood changes, and Kuhn is ablaze throughout. The three-part Flipping embraces fast swing over McCoy Tyner-like chords, some dreamy meditation for violin and piano, and staccato free jazz. Kuhn sounds like Cecil Taylor over Johnson's demented drumming on the title track, and Sad Ballad shifts between reflectiveness and impassioned collective roars. It sounds of its time, but it was a good time for Ponty and Kuhn. **JF**

### Nidi D'Arac

Taranta Container

★★★★★



(Galileo/Discovery)

Nidi D'Arac are southern Italy's answer to Oysterband and Transglobal Underground. Formed more than a decade ago by Alessandro Coppola, they set out to revive and update the traditional music of their region, *tarantella*, a style based around rapid-fire tambourine percussion and associated with a whirling folk dance that is said to cure victims of the bite of a local spider. Nidi D'Arac's slick, engaging treatment of the music involves sturdy acoustic passages in which Coppola's vocals are backed by his guitar work, violin and accordion, and then thunderous bursts of folk-rock, electronica and dub. Released in advance of the band's appearance at Womad and other festivals, this album features new recordings of some of their best-known songs, with inspired, rapid-fire violin work on *Gocce*, and an impressive mixture of acoustic to dub

styles on *Ronde Noe*. But it's let down by the final five tracks, in which producers and DJs from across Europe remix the songs, with variable results; Amsterdam's StreamerPilot make them sound like a novelty dance outfit. I suspect they will sound far better playing live. **Robin Denselow**

### Arat Kilo

A Night in Abyssinia

★★★★★



(Warner Classics and Jazz)

Ever since the Ethiopiques CD releases reminded the west about the extraordinary music that could be heard in Addis Ababa in the golden era of the 1960s and early 70s, there has been a flurry of very different fusion bands making use of Ethiopian influences, including this young French five-piece who take their name from an Addis monument. They are good players who mix funky guitar with bass, drums and horns - brass was often a crucial ingredient in the Addis sound - and they have mastered the distinctive, at times Arabic-sounding Ethiopian style. All that's lacking is a sense of energy and fun, especially in their instrumental treatment of a piece by the country's best-loved singer, the late Tlahoun Gèssèssè. Their own Ethiopian-influenced tracks include a jazzy collaboration with the rapper Socalled, but they are at their best when joined by African celebrities. Mulatu Astatke, the veteran "father of Ethio jazz" plays vibes on his own *Dewel*, while the best track, *Get a Chew*, is transformed by the exquisite, drifting, Ethiopian-edged vocals from Mali's Rokia Traore. With more help like this, they would sound very good indeed. **RD**

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