

World Music Central

New Gypsy Music Releases

Different Approaches Both Hit the Mark

As Rom (Gypsy) music gets bigger and bigger globally, the parameters that define it have begun to blur. These two very fine recordings are satisfyingly well within the realm of what one would expect Gypsy music to sound like, but both succeed on their own terms. Besh o Drom (their name means "go your own way") include source material from all over the Balkans and Eastern Europe in their music, and they toss off a couple of traditional-sounding pieces before bringing in rock, jazz, cabaret, hip-hop and electronica accents to jack up the fun meter a few notches.

"Cigansko Oro" bops as hard as any Gypsy brass music and bounces around a few well-placed turntable scratches before dropping into an almost mambo feel with some oddly processed vocals. That's followed by the rich, rhythmically sensual "Afgan," and such is the eclectic nature of Besh o Drom. They're obviously skilled musicians who take chances and liberties and make them pay off, moving from the familiar to the unexpected fluidly and expertly. Compare, for example, the entirely nutty "Pergeto (scat song)" with the salty strut of "Kanna Solo" (which includes some of the most killer udu drumming you'll ever hear) and you realize how many and varied are the strengths of this album and this band.

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