

Ersatzmusika Songs Unrecantable

Asphalt Tango Records CD-ATR2209

Full Price (46 mins)



No regrets for Berlin's noir psychedelicists



Irina Doubrovskaja is the still centre of a swirling, swaying troupe of Soviet émigré musicians now living in East Berlin. Carrying on from where 2007's *Voice Letter* left off – and sounding as narcotically stark as the Velvet Underground's Nico – Doubrovskaja leads her band of far-from-merry men in another ragbag collection of songs of hope and disenchantment. This is a band that clearly enjoys the way Tom Waits takes a tune and then knocks it out of shape until he's made something old out of something probably borrowed, and certainly new.

'Berceuse' sounds like a distant, sleepier relative of the Doors' 'Riders on the Storm' while 'Unredeemed' resurrects the three-steps-to-hell descending minor chord sequences much favoured by trip-hop bands such as Portishead. Then there's the woozy spoken-word track 'Letter from Baltimore' which, like several of the songs here, utilises some suitably enigmatic found text. But it's not all agreeably seductive doom and gloom. The cheerfully throwaway 'Oy, Pterodactyl' echoes the ragged lopsided rock'n'roll of the B-52s and comes complete with a discombobulating guitar solo of the highest order.

The only time interest flags is when the 'life's a crazy fairground ride' of 'Antediluvian' waltzed into view. Aren't there already enough unhinged, subtly psychedelic waltzes in this world? But, to their credit, this was the only time Ersatzmusika stepped over the line into blatant cliché. So I urge both established fans and sonically adventurous nostalgists to investigate.

Howard Male