

**Fanfare Ciocarlia / The Story of the Band DVD**

At the moment, DVDs are the hottest cash generator in the music industry. Yet world music labels have been slow to pick up on the boom, perhaps cautious due to the small sales market for roots music CDs; which is understandable with even the likes of top West African and Latin performers rarely attracting even a shred of the audience that consumes rock-pop-hip-hop. Surely this will change: with most world music artists tending to generate revenue through live concerts (as opposed to CD sales), then the DVD is a way of letting the audience take the concert home.

Fitting then that Fanfare Ciocarlia, the legendary Gypsy brass band from Northern Romania, have ventured forth with this DVD: Fanfare are arguably the hardest-working, most wildly potent (and popular) Balkan Gypsy band on the planet. And 'The Story of the Band' sets out to remind fans - and initiate novices - as to why this is so. Catch Fanfare on a good night, i.e. one where the audience is as charged as the band, and you will experience the best live band in the world - the dozen-strong orchestra revving up and taking off, kicking brass music into places it has never gone before. So powerful, so frantic is the Fanfare live experience, this beautifully furious sonic charge, it can create a near trance experience for those engaging with it.

Doubt me? Watch the 2004 Berlin concert that opens this DVD: 62minutes and 50 seconds of wild Balkan fury with the audience literally pitching itself onto the stage. The organic release of all involved says much about why music crosses boundaries effortlessly and the world has turned again and again to Gypsy music over the centuries. Following the concert is 'Iag Bari - Brass on Fire', the 2001 documentary film on Fanfare Ciocarlia by German director Ralf Marschalleck. This is a superb film, beginning with beautifully muddy abstract images from the band's village in the heart of winter, following their international tour (which finishes in Japan, where they're joined by a Japanese band who blow Balkan brass!) and returning in summer to this same tiny hamlet. Cleverly blending producer / manager Henry Ernst's discovery of the band with the film's narrative journey, 'Iag Bari' is a great journey into the soul of the band.

Extras include band leader Ioan Ivancea narrating the history of their village, Zece Prajini, and musical traditions; two witty videos; a presentation of the entire band; a discography (three albums: buy 'em all); rough 8mm footage shot by the band and outtakes from the upcoming film 'Gypsy Caravan' (which focuses on the 40-musician-strong tour that crisscrossed the US in the late 1990s). Throughout the DVD, Fanfare Ciocarlia's warmth, wit, musical brilliance and generosity shines through, so making this not only an essential purchase, but setting a standard for all world music DVDs to follow.