



World music CD

Toni Iordache, Sounds from a Bygone Age, Vol 4

4 stars (Asphalt Tango)

Robin Denselow
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This, surely, has to be the most uninspired, unexciting album title of the year, which is unfortunate because the music is the exact opposite - it's a highly original, rousing reminder of one of the great performers in Balkan music history. Toni Iordache was a Romanian instrumentalist who became one of the country's greatest celebrities back in the 1950s and 60s, the era of the Ceausescu dictatorship. When he was put on trial for the illegal possession of foreign currency, his band leader told the court that there were three giants in the country: Ceausescu himself, Ilie Nastase (the tennis star) and Iordache. This set proves why he was so popular. He was a virtuoso on the tambal, the east European version of the hammered dulcimer, and was famous for playing at breakneck speed, while matching grand epic passages with songs that were both stirring and passionate, or simply upbeat and jaunty. His band on these recordings includes accordion, trumpet, violin and a variety of singers, but it's Iordache's quite extraordinary tambal work that makes it so special.

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