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Inside **Music**: Consumer Guide



Toni Iordache
"Songs From a Bygone Era: Vol 4"
(Asphalt Tango)

Probably the greatest Gypsy musician of post-World War II Romania, Iordache died of diabetes in 1988. He played cymbalum, called here tambal, a hammered dulcimer that avoids twee vibraphonics in his strong and supple hands but is still a sideman's ax. Nobody recorded much under Nicolae Ceausescu's regime. But though these 14 mostly instrumental tracks don't even include the fleet "Hora de la Bolintin," they satisfy beginning to end. Where Hungary's Kálmán Balogh is florid, Iordache is always crisp -- even the five-minute ballad contains its romanticism. As a star of the weddings where all Gypsy musicians make their nut, he spends most of his precious recording time getting the blood flowing. Of course there are trumpet, accordion and violin -- how could there not be? And two guest vocalists -- the hot-and-cool Romica Puceanu on four tracks, the friendlier and lighter Gabi Lunca on two -- provide all the change-up you'll need.

Grade: A MINUS