

Lid Trøen, whose flute flows and weaves, and Dag Arnesen, whose gentle piano accompaniment is prodded along by bassist Ole Marius Sandberg. The playful “Turbulence” interrupts its own cruising tone with a final dissonant uproar.

Tri vendur blés ho i den høgaste sky is a bird of another color. Grounded in Norwegian medieval ballads and their underlying stories, the album is redolent with traditional modal folk singing, which often is highly emotive *a cappella*. Present also are strains of the Sami people’s ancient vocal heritage. For those unfamiliar with these styles, an analog might be the more familiar Celtic forms. In the hands of vocalist Unni Boksasp, the effect is central to the album’s powerfully stirring impact. However, it is the combination of her singing with Viddal’s compositions, instrumentation and modern interpretations that make this album an overwhelmingly poignant experience. “Maria Magdalena (Held in Disgrace)”, “Valivan (The Pioneer)”, and “Trollstemt (Harp Strings)” evoke memories of roots and rock, textures of wool, and the feel of soil and earth. The low murmurs of “Subconscious” echo like notes in an empty church. The lament “Stolt Margjit” and “Marie (Cure)” (akin to an aria) unfold like intricate weaving, the attenuated vocals knit together with fiddle bow, bass and whispering winds. The album is not simply a meditation on Norwegian traditions, however. It travels across borders and periods, integrating Arabesques, Middle Eastern music, the symphonic, chorales and more modern improvisational structures. “Kvinnemorderen (Scheherazade)”, for instance, dances with appropriately sleek, winding lines and the fanfare of “Gullborgs (Fearless Girl)” races and twirls in a jazz fiesta.

Losen Records here has produced two very different albums: *New Paintings of Jazz* is suited to a

peaceful evening, as *Tri vendur blés ho i den høgaste sky* presents an exquisite cultural merger demonstrating music’s ability to define places, penetrate spiritual cores and transcend time and space.

For more info visit losenrecords.no



Antónima
Sofía Rei (GroundUP Music)
by Wif Stenger

On *Antónima*, Argentinian singer-songwriter Sofía Rei performs in a fabulous acoustic jazz duo with Peruvian bassist Jorge Roeder. Though they’ve been touring, playing songs from their powerful 2023 album *Coplas Escondidas*, this new project is a completely different kettle of fish, as Rei shifts gears from acoustic minimalism to electronic-driven complexity. The only common threads are her songwriting and mighty voice—though this time it’s processed, multitracked and blended with guest vocalists: nine women from all over Latin America, including genre-crossers such as Xenia Rubinos and Gaby Moreno. Despite the number of guests, this party still sounds unified, thanks partly to co-production, arrangements and programming by JC Maillard, and mixing and mastering by recently

deceased legend Bob Power.

With this album, Rei picks up where she left off with 2021’s *Umbral*: sophisticated electronic alt-pop without obvious nods to jazz (besides Josh Deutsch’s sensitive trumpet work on “Peter Pánico”). On the title track, Colombian duo Las Áñez echoes the great Barcelona nuevo flamenco/hip-hop band Ojos de Brujo. There are many compelling, complex elements involved, but also, in contrast, simple hand drumming throughout, like a heartbeat. Mireya Ramos duets on “Si Una Cae” with Cuban percussionist Pedrito Martinez, who adds a gentle hint of cumbia. The poignant refrain is a call to resistance, translating roughly as “If one falls, others rise/From their ashes, your fire.” The vocals get intense and almost scary on the single “Zig Zag”, featuring singer extraordinaire Daymé Arocena, with Yoruba incantations and West African highlife guitar alongside a squiggly synth and near-techno beats.

Rei’s wide palette extends the breadth of her previous half-dozen albums in Spanish, French and English. She’s a versatile vocalist, appealing and expressive in many styles and settings. From a background in punk and classical, she’s explored and fused genres from fado to funk, house, klezmer and Ethio-jazz as well as South American folk styles. Her collaborators over two decades in New York includes a wide array, too, from Maria Schneider and John Zorn to Myra Melford, Bobby McFerrin and Marc Ribot.

Antónima is a heady, ultra-produced mix of cutting-edge and traditional Latin sounds, but to hear Rei’s unadorned voice in all its power, glory and improvisational skills, check her out on *Coplas Escondidas*, as well as live, onstage.

For more info visit groundupmusic.net. The album release concert is at National Sawdust Apr. 2. See Calendar.

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