

Amparanoia's leading lady, Amparo Sánchez

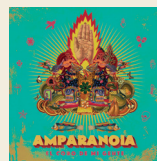


Amparanoia El Coro de Mi Gente

Calaverita Records (62 mins)

★★★★★

Left-wing Latin-world fusions from Spain's one-woman army



All the tracks of this album – Amparanoia's ninth – feature a big-name guest from the Hispanic music world, including Manu Chao, Marinah from Ojos de Brujo, Colombian alt-rockers Aterciopelados and Puerto Rican singer Mimi Maura. The album title, meaning 'Chorus of My People' and song titles such as 'Hacer Dinero' (Making Money) make it evident that here is a grouping sympathetic to singer Amparo Sánchez's politics. Over 15 songs, we get sizzling salsa and *cumbia* beats, Mexican *mariachi*, Shadows-style Western guitar, Spanish, English and French lyrics, funky synth wah-wah

and a 1980s-style undulation backed by a reggae beat on another. It's no surprise Caalexico feature as guests, as their neo-gothic '*frontera*' spirit broods over several songs.

Sánchez might well be the foremost Spanish exponent of pan-Latin fusion right now, and she is wise to ally herself with a few of her precursors and natural stablemates. While the music rarely reaches the rootsy depths or ironic heights of, say, David Byrne's *Rei Momo*, it's all riotously good fun, the agit-prop of anti-capitalism anthems delivered with infectious humour, a carnivalesque chaos of sounds and plenty of catchy tunes.

CHRIS MOSS

TRACK TO TRY *En la Noche*

TOP
OF THE
WORLD
TRACK 1

Animanz & Juanita Euka Exotic Other

TruThoughts (47 mins)

★★★★★

A bunch of party animanz



Animanz are three musical childhood friends, based in London, who front a collective committed to playing party tunes in which 'the groove and energy are the most

important things.' A little like Belgium's La Chiva Gantiva or New York's MAKU Soundsystem, they play fast and loose with genres like *cumbia*, funk and Afrobeat, and wrap up the sum of the polymorphic parts in an edgy punk aesthetic. As their debut album confirms, singer Juanita Euka (niece of the mighty Franco, no less) provides the missing ingredient they previously felt they lacked.

The compelling rhythmic pulse of the title-track and initial single characterises an album that bristles

with attitude. Vicious, choppy guitar, stabbing keyboards and braying horns create a swirling, funky stew that's stirred by Euka's measured vocals – most infectiously on the skewed *bossa nova* of 'Gypsy Woman'. If it's party music, then it's sometimes the kind of unsettling party that's happening in an engineering factory, but at its best – on tracks like 'The Drip', 'Tiempo', the furious 'Disconnect' and 'Ain't No Way' (which sounds like it's hot off the Daptone label's production line) –

Animanz suggest they have found a recipe for impending success.

MARK SAMPSON

TRACK TO TRY *Gypsy Woman*

Bellegarde Anba Tonèl

Bellegarde (35 mins)

★★★★★

Pan-Caribbean dance music, of an antique vintage



The Montréal percussionist Daniel Bellegarde is devoted to old-time Caribbean

ballroom music, in which Africa met Europe in the Creole style. The production style of this debut might be modern, complete with electric bass, but the delivery is antique rural, concentrating on banjos, fiddle and the leader/arranger's own broad percussion collection. This includes the *manouba*, a 'rumba box,' or massive low-note *kalimba*.

The album's styles run through quadrille, contra-dance and Congo-minuet, and tunes arrive from Haiti, Guadeloupe and the Dominican Republic. Bellegarde uses ticking metal, resonant frame drum and rattling shakers, with banjos, fiddle and even hurdy-gurdy frequently stepping to the fore. He also has enjoyably raspy lead singer Marco Jeanty and The Kreol Supremes Choir on board, calling and responding on many of the usually short numbers of this breezily concise album. Bellegarde's arrangements are very ensemble-orientated, with the spotlight varying throughout, the emphasis subtly shifting.

MARTIN LONGLEY

TRACK TO TRY *Pantolon*

Catarina Dos Santos Rádio Kriola

ARC Music (52 mins)

★★★★★

Latin American nation-hopping with style and grace



The idea could have proved a little too ambitious, but the truth is that in a single grasp Catarina Dos

Santos has confidently melded Portuguese, Angolan, Cape Verdean and Brazilian traditions. Having grown up in the working-class town of Barreiro, Portugal, Dos Santos was always surrounded by this intense mix of different cultures that, in various