

tongue-in-cheek humour here (one particularly knotty track is titled 'Keeps the Audience Away'), the trio approach their music seriously. They choose collaborators carefully too. Opener 'Yee Haw' is a rollicking ride with Magnus Wiik's banjo sparring with guest Ola Kvernberg's fiddle; a scratchy, suspended middle section calms things down before the original riff kicks back in and Wiik soars off with a speedy solo. Kvernberg again excels on 'Delayed Response', taken at indecent speed, and the aforementioned 'Keeps the Audience Away' features a beautifully ramshackle accordion solo from Stian Carstensen. Well worth checking out.

TIM WOODALL

**TRACK TO TRY** *Yee Haw*

### Mehmet Polat Trio Next Spring

Home Records (57 mins)

★★★★★

*Three very different instruments spring into action*



This meeting of the *ud*, *ney* and *kora* is contemplative and exploratory – an experiment in their shared sensibilities and in forging new paths. Bringing together the soundscapes of Turkey and West Africa, there are moments of pure symbiosis in this hard-to-pin-down fusion. Mehmet Polat's *ud* is the dominant force that underpins the whole album; it is the instrument that feels most confident, with *kora* player Soumana Diarra and Sinan Arat on the *ney* (flute) walking a path alongside it.

'One Drop in the Ocean' is a less than stimulating opening to the album but with its successor, 'There Life Begins Again', *Next Spring* gains momentum after a full and mellifluous *ud* intro. 'Next Spring' builds on the *ud*'s rich timbre and resonance – the thrumming bass notes provide a beautiful wash, over which the *kora* and *ney* really come into their own. There is a bit of a recurring theme of a strong introduction being followed by a period of weaker interaction between instruments, but there are nonetheless a few absolute gems on the album, particularly 'The Day Will Comeungle' – and yes, the track is actually called that. Long puddles of rich bass phrases are accompanied by the reedy, haunting lilt of *ney* before the two move into a frenzied and flighty duet. Hypnotic, yearning and steamy, it is the album's standout track.

OLIVIA HAUGHTON

**TRACK TO TRY** *The Day Will Comeungle*

### Sonido Vegetal Las Bases del Razonamiento

Maldito Digital (40 mins)

★★★★★

*Spanish punk with a Balkan twist*



For the most part, Sonido Vegetal seem to be part of the great line of Spanish ska-punk bands, but their own individual style also draws from Eastern European Gypsy music. It's a great combination executed with a natural ease, the horn section switching freely between typical ska blasts and the pumping of Balkan brass. As you'd expect with a punk-Gypsy mix, there are hints of the band's spiritual siblings Gogol Bordello and former Bordello guitarist Oren Kaplan makes several appearances throughout the album. But their dedication to Latin ska gives them their unique sound.

Every track here feels interesting and different, due to each having a slightly different twist, from the dubby 'El Hormiguero' to the surf-rock of 'De Nada'. Flamenco is also explored, with the title-track examining the connections between the Spanish and Balkan Gypsy styles. This album makes a big noise that's great to jump around to: an album this fun is its own reward.

JIM HICKSON

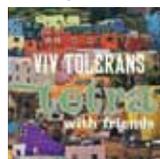
**TRACK TO TRY** *De Nada*

### Tetra Viv Tolerans

Footprint Records (53 mins)

★★★★★

*Perhaps too much tolerance here*



Ingrid Brännström, Sanna Källman, Anna Ottertun and Maria Stellas formed Tetra in 2006; the four female vocalists have backgrounds in, respectively, Scandinavian folk, Haitian music, Arabic music and the Greek *rebetika* tradition. This is their third album and it finds the Sweden-based quartet joined by nearly a dozen guest musicians from around the world, including Ale Möller and Sten Källman.

The majority of the material on this collection are traditional tunes from Scandinavia, Greece, Lebanon, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Senegal and Haiti. The one non-traditional song here is the title-track, apparently inspired by a conversation with a singer from the Haitian group Boukmans Eksperyans, which was presumably more inspiring than the resulting tune. Tetra describe



Tahmineh Amirzadeh



### Mahsa Vahdat Traces from an Old Vineyard

Kirkelig Kulturverksted (57 mins)

★★★★★

*That old vineyard's born magnificent modern fruit*



The first time I heard the subtle Iranian singer Mahsa Vahdat was via a CD playing at Lorca, an artists' café in Tehran. It was an album she recorded with the American blues singer Mighty Sam McClain, *Deeper Tone of Longing*. After many collaborations, this is Vahdat's first true solo CD. She is backed up by Norwegian pianist and electronic keyboard player Tord Gustavsen, Shervin Mohajer on the *kamancheh* (spike fiddle) and the renowned Iranian percussionist Ali Rahimi. It is astonishing how three instrumentalists and a voice can conjure such a striking variety of atmospheres, oscillating between brooding suspense and rapturous

ecstasy. The ease with which she bridges genres lifts the music to that rare category of fully convincing fusion: this album easily reaches the heights of Oriental fusion scaled by the likes of Dhafer Youssef.

The lyrics of the album are derived from poems by the Persian poet Hafez, Rumi and Omar Khayyam. While embracing modernity, Vahdat always relates back to Persian musical traditions. On pieces such as 'Sleepless Eyes' and 'Kissing the Wine Jug', the voice, the keyboards and the *kamancheh* powerfully merge in improvisations that are close to the classical Persian style. Mahsa Vahdat has masterfully proven how it's possible for Persian music to continue evolving.

NEIL VAN DER LINDEN

**TRACK TO TRY** *Sleepless Eyes*

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the album as 'comforting songs and lullabies from many cultures'; most of the tracks here are a mite too comforting. They verge on the soporific, certainly for this listener.

KEVIN BOURKE

**TRACK TO TRY** *Viv Tolerans*

### Yiddish Twist Orchestra Let's!

Bergmanton Twist Series (34 mins)

★★★★★

*Cheeky, cheeky ska-klezmer fun*



The debut album by London's Yiddish Twist Orchestra adopts a puzzling stance. It has enough of a rampant novelty factor to scare away purists, yet it's too esoteric to be chasing

commercial success. It appears to be paying homage to the repertoire of a phantom Beat-era progenitor of the 'Yiddish twist', Willie Bergman.

Even though the YTO line-up boasts some of the UK's most admired and versatile musicians – among them Ben Mandelson, Dave Bitelli and Roy Dodds – the overwhelming presence of Ska Cubano vocalist Natty Bo and his mannered style borders on irritating and the parodic. There are enjoyable moments, but as the vocal numbers teeter between kitsch and tacky, the best cuts are the five instrumentals, which are packed with Paul Taylor's rosy-cheeked trombone solos and Ben Mandelson's horizon-stretching twang guitar.

MARTIN LONGLEY

**TRACK TO TRY** *Avinu Malkein*