

POSITIVITY ORKESTINA

Positivity Orkestina World Village
WV498009

MARTIN LUBENOV ORKESTAR

Two Roads Connecting Cultures CD50018

MARTIN LUBENOV & JAZZTA PRASTA BAND

Veselina Connecting Cultures CC50026

LES GITANS DE SARAJEVO

En Voyage own label CDLCD-2004

I know nothing about Positivity Orkestina – awful name – and the CD appears to involve Bulgarian musicians who are based in Spain. They play traditional dances on stringed instruments and clarinet and appear to have a good feel for the music. While they bring little new to the arrangements, their feel is good and fresh and the recording quality high. Recommended.

www.worldvillagemusic.com; via Harmonia Mundi.

Martin Lubenov is a leading Bulgarian Gypsy accordion player. He was instrumental in bringing Jony Iliev to the attention of the West but his desire to lead Iliev's band meant he got the boot long before Iliev released his great *Ma Maren Ma* album. To get his revenge, Lubenov has formed his own orkestar – the Iliev chapter isn't mentioned in the intelligent sleeve notes accompanying this well packaged and recorded CD (though one of the same photos from Jony's album is included here) – but the music should do the talking. Lubenov is definitely a highly competent accordionist and his young band are tasty. But they're not very exciting. And Lubenov, who produced this album, needs an outsider to produce and push him and the band to stretch – a lot of the time this sounds like Balkan café music, lyrical but rarely challenging. For aficionados, *Two Roads* is an album of interest, but I can't see Lubenov grabbing the Western audience that consumes Fanfare, Taraf and Iliev.

The Lubenov album with Jazzta Prasta Band is, for me, the more successful of the two albums as Lubenov sounds more comfortable amongst a small ensemble (drums, clarinet, double bass) who tend to improvise in a jazz style, than with his traditional Bulgarian Roma orkestar. As with Ivo Papasov, Lubenov and friends obviously hold a great affection for jazz while maintaining an Oriental flavour to their sound. *Veselina* is no classic, again it's too polite, the band hold back whilst suggesting they could stretch further, but it is well recorded and full of lyrical playing.

www.choicemusic.nl