

Mambo Cósmico

by **Sonido Gallo Negro** (*Glitterbeat! Records, CD, LP and digital*)

Cumbia on congos and bongos, cha-cha-cha on cheesy Farfisa organs: Mexico City's Sonido Gallo Negro ('Black Rooster Sound') has always delighted in sending its listeners into a sonic time-warp in which all is never what it seems. Do their wildly melodic, sci-fi sounds signify 'now'? Do they signify 'then'? And what meaning can be wrought from the Rooster's dizzying rhythms? **Mambo Cósmico**, the nine-piece band's third album, accentuates the musicians' tendency towards its own singular Latino-futurism, and accomplishes quite a kick in the process.

Curiously, given the way that Sonido Gallo Negro create a music that simultaneously refers backwards to a colour-saturated 1950s and forwards to a near-future, there are only two covers among the album's 11 tracks. One, '¿Quién Será?' is recognizable as a big-band mambo that has been around for some 60 years, although here it's given a frenetic edge by Gabriel López's guitar and organ. 'Tolú' also heralds from the 1950s, but its fierce rhythms are more to the fore. The universality of the mambo is, perhaps,



Sonido Gallo Negro – delivering Latino-futurism with a kick.

the main thrust of the album. It's done by incorporating Hispanic, African, and even cod-Middle Eastern cadences to claim a historical universality for the rhythm. 'Cumbia Ishtar', which takes cumbia back to ancient Babylon, might be ahistorical, but it's deliciously delirious.

★★★ LG

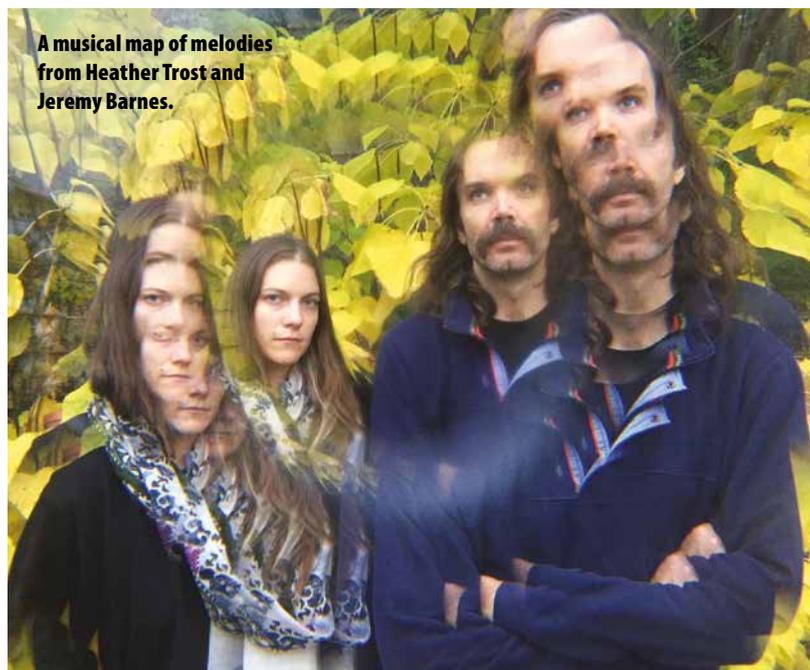
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Forest Bathing

by **A Hawk and a Hacksaw** (*Living Music Duplication CD, LP*)

For the Japanese, forest bathing is a way to get out of the rat race – if only for an afternoon – and to wander in an



A musical map of melodies from Heather Trost and Jeremy Barnes.

atmosphere in which cool air and calm prevails. For A Hawk and a Hacksaw, the forest of choice is in New Mexico where the multi-instrumentalist duo – Heather Trost and Jeremy Barnes – come from. In their hands **Forest Bathing** is a flow of ideas. It's akin to a musical map in which

melodies flow along rivers and are carried on winds. The first track of nine is called 'Alexandria': the poetic sleeve-notes tell us that a Bulgarian merchant visited the great city on business and now he dreams of the music he heard there.

This is an elegiac way of dealing with a swathe of music and the shifting sounds as the music of Eastern Europe and its environs travels westwards. The instrumentals that Trost and Barnes construct are augmented by superb guests from abroad – clarinetist Cüneyt Sepetçi from Istanbul and the Hungarian cimbalom player Unger Balász – and in the US, Sam Johnson on trumpet, guitarist John Dieterich and acoustic bassist Noah Martinez. The overall feel of **Forest Bathing** is a dreamy haze of connectivity in which a jaunty microtonality is filtered through lenses that are sometimes psychedelic, sometimes arch. In both cases, the result is nothing short of exhilarating.

★★★★★ LG

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