

Threaded Of What We Spoke

Threaded (60 mins)

★★★★★

The clarinet gets its moment



Threaded are a classically trained English folk trio from the Midlands and this beautifully

designed CD is their first release. If you think the clarinet deserves more prominence in folk music, you'll probably take a shine to Threaded, who blend Jamie Rutherford's guitar with Rosie Bott's clarinet and the violin of Ning-Ning Li (whose illustrations also grace the album cover). The quirky opening track, 'The New Living Room', sounds like it could have been a slightly manic piece of incidental music from *Pogles' Wood* or *Ivor the Engine*.

The collection intersperses Rutherford's songs with an agreeable variety of instrumentals. Some of the songs are more effective than others. 'Left Off', a tender ballad of lost friendship, has shades of Nickel Creek and stays with the listener. While the idea of setting Robert Browning's 'Pied Piper of Hamelin' as a song is novel and admirable, the result – 'A Secret Charm' – is not entirely successful. On the whole, the instrumentals work best. On the delicate 'The Courtyard', Bott's clarinet somehow evokes the sound of a fairground organ, while 'Captain Markham' sounds like Rodrigo y Gabriela swapping guitars for violin and clarinet.

TONY GILLAM

TRACK TO TRY *The New Living Room*

You Shouldn't Know From It It's Klezmer!

Danzone (99 mins)

★★★★★

Short and sweet: Berlin's top klezmer players team up



The title says it all really. This is a solid collection of traditional tunes with a handful of originals, including a couple of songs, superbly performed and arranged for clarinet, accordion, bass and drums, with the odd bit of tuba, trumpet and voice. The album is inspired by klezmer music from the first half of the 20th century, and songs performed at weddings and festivities in East European *shtetls*. Each member of the band is a

sought-after player from the Berlin scene and their quality shines through. Stylistically, the playing is excellent and is particularly nice to hear the sound of the snare drum paying homage to klezmer drumming's martial origins.

The recording is pretty short though (most of the tracks being around two or three minutes long) and does not reach the inventiveness of many of the other projects the band members are involved with. Having said this, if you are searching for well-executed renditions of traditional tunes to make you get up and dance then this no-nonsense album is for you.

TOM NEWELL

TRACK TO TRY *Bughici*

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Why the Mountains are Black: Primeval Greek Village Music 1907-1960

Third Man Records (2 CDs, 96 mins)

★★★★★

Greek traditional music as you've never heard it before



In early 1980s Epirus (Greece), I learned of a University of Washington musicologist

engaged in fieldwork for a PhD on live Greek festival music. After a summer spent enduring rock instrumentation, fuse-melting amplification and generally tasteless interpretation, she abandoned the project.

She was two decades too late for the last of the musicians featured on these 28 tracks – all admirably remastered from vintage 78s belonging to collector and field-researcher Christopher King, previously responsible for the excellent *Takimi of Epirus* double set. This more specialist outing is certainly 'primal,' though perhaps not quite so unhinged as Third Man's press release promises. It's best approached having prior familiarity with Greek traditional sounds; there are no familiar names here besides Macedonian master fiddler Demetrios Semsis, Nikos Karakostas (from Trikala province) on clarinet and the great vocalist Dalgas (aka Andonios Diamandidis). Danceable virtuoso instrumentals predominate over vocals.

The selections comprise the usual pairing of *zournás* (folk *shawm*) and deep-toned or frame drum; sinuous clarinet improvisations; duelling violins, *gaïdes* (mainland bagpipes) or

tsaboúnes (island pipes); Cretan *lyra* (lap fiddle); and the classic mainland acoustic *koumpania* (as shown on Robert Crumb's cover painting) of violin, clarinet, percussion and plucked strings. Special treats include Dalgas on rural folk material rather than his usual art singing, ornately inventive fiddler Alexis Zoumbas,

Athanasios Lavidas' sinuous clarinet, plus Semsis' jaunty 'Syrtos Politikos'.

King's liner notes intelligently place music and players (some anonymous) in their social context, and explain why so much was recorded in the US.

MARC DUBIN

TRACK TO TRY *Tzarama* by Nikos Karakostas & M Kallergis



**TOP
OF THE
WORLD**
TRACK 7

Veretski Pass with Joel Rubin Poyln: A Gilgul

Golden Horn Records (69 mins)

★★★★★

Jewish and Polish tunes, klezmer-style, by the very best



Although there's been a great revival of klezmer and Jewish music in the former

Eastern Bloc, it's still American musicians who've been in the forefront of the most interesting research and revival. Names such as Michael Alpert, Alan Bern, Bob Cohen and the musicians on this album – Joshua Horowitz and Joel Rubin – are leaders in the field, all American. With his bands Budowitz and Veretski Pass, button accordion and *tsimbl* (*cimbalom*) player Joshua Horowitz has explored the grassroots traditions of old-time klezmer music in Eastern Europe.

The title of this album translates as 'Poland: A Metamorphosis'. Before the Holocaust, Poland had a Jewish population of over three million. Klezmer musicians in Poland played both Jewish and

Polish tunes for weddings, parties – and for whoever needed music. On this disc, Veretski Pass bring together traditional tunes from the Jewish and Polish repertoire, sometimes wistful, sometimes exuberant, but always expertly played by Joel Rubin on C clarinet (the high, cheeky klezmer one), Cookie Segelstein on violin, Joshua Horowitz on accordions and *tsimbl*, and Stuart Brotman on Polish-style cello-bass. One of the most beautiful tunes is 'Gedankn' (Thanks), a tune by Jewish cantor Majer Bogdanski (1912-2005) with whom Budowitz worked on their *Wedding Without a Bride* album. It's played by Rubin on the clarinet with subtle flourishes, but drawing out the emotion with every note. This is a memorable and important album from true masters of the klezmer repertoire.

SIMON BROUGHTON

TRACK TO TRY *Gedankn*