Rupa & The April Fishes - Este Mundo (2009)

1. (La frontera) 2. C'est moi 3. Por la frontera 4. La linea 5. La rose 6. Culpa de la luna 7. L'elephant 8. Soledad 9. (el camino del diablo) 10. Este mundo 11. Soy payaso 12. Neruda 13. Trouble 14. La estrella caida 15. Espero la luna Rupa Marya – Vocals, Glockenspiel, Guitar, Sounds [Wineglass] Ara Anderson - Pump Organ, Sousaphone, Trumpet Boots Riley - Rap Ralph Carney - Sax (Baritone), Sax (Soprano) Isabel Douglass - Accordion, Bandoneon Jorge Molina - Berimbau Safa Shokrai - Bass (Electric), Bass (Upright) Djordje Stijepovic - Electric Upright Bass Eliyahu Sills – Bansuri Aaron Kierbel - Drums, Percussion, Sounds [Fish] Robin Sukhadia – Tabla Robin Sukhadia, Raul Vargas - Vocals Peter Jaques - Clarinet Ed Baskerville, Paweł Walerowski – Cello Andy Strain - Trombone

After a breakthrough debut with Extraordinary Rendition, San Francisco's Rupa Marya and her band of musical misfits returned in 2009 with Este Mundo, an album formed in ways around a more singular cultural core. The musicality of the group is without question -- the players jump into formation at the drop of a hat, and can alternately swing together or clash as they devolve into a frenzy of excited improvisation. There are still the elements of Gypsy jazz, the elements of Indian classical music, and the Argentinean milongas and tango pieces that were present in their previous album. However, there's a stronger tie both thematically and musically with Mexico here. The lyrics, largely in Spanish, deal strongly with the displacement and danger inherent in border-crossing, and the music takes on a casual norteño sound with its reliance on the accordion and bass. Even the pieces with a theoretical Andalusian or Argentinean pattern end with a bit of a country feel thanks to some violin playing that verges on fiddle territory. The group makes a point of social statement within its music, and showcases cultural diversity whenever possible. At times, the ethnic portions can seem a bit ill-fitted (and worse when a stray rapper is enlisted to juxtapose against more traditional fare), but the full album is a worthwhile one. Transitions from raga to klezmer to chanson are rarely so fluid. While the music's goals or directions may never be entirely understood, you can still enjoy the sound.
---Adam Greenberg, Rovi

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