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NEW WORLD



AFRICA



OLD WORLD (Asia, Arabia, Europe)

Updated 1 January 2013



Happy New Year, pop pickers, from all of us here at Muzikifan. We look forward to combing the globe in 2013 to find news of exciting music and bring it to you.

Greetings, Platterbugs!

This month: I updated my computer which also updated all my programs. One side-effect was that TextEdit (which is the simple program I use for composing HTML) added an auto-correct feature, so it would "correct" my typing. When I wrote "kora" it made it "okra"-- hopefully I caught all of these moronisms and wont be embarrassed by this post!

TAKE A PICTURE, IT'LL LAST LONGER

If you are in San Francisco, check out [Michael Kenna's show](#) of B&W photos from Asia at Stephen Wirtz gallery, 49 Geary. He also has work on view at Tacoma Art Museum through March, and in Tokyo and Dallas, mentioned on his website.

Otherwise you can check out [Steve McCurry at home](#).

AUDIO INFIDELITY

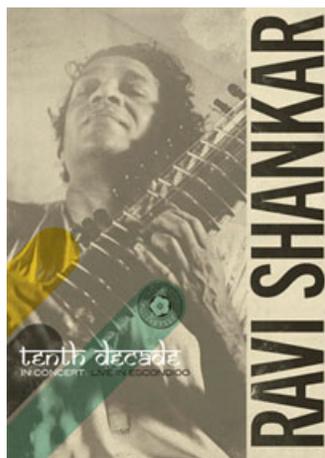
From the Duchess: this classical orchestra in Paraguay plays on instruments made from [recycled trash](#), see also [here](#).

I can't imagine why anyone would want to watch this slowed-down version of "Gangam Style" by some [Korean girls](#), unless maybe they were intent on learning the steps....

Last month I reviewed the new album from Very Be Careful. There's a free MP3 of the first single off the album streaming [here](#).

Mark G sends a link to a radio broadcast ostensibly from Jamaica 1969 on the occasion of the death of Skatalites trombonist Don Drummond. [A Requiem for Don Drummond](#).

This month's new releases



**RAVI SHANKAR
TENTH DECADE IN CONCERT/LIVE
IN ESCONDIDO ([East Meets West
Music EMWM1007](#))**

I had this DVD in my player when I read the news on the BBC that Ravi Shankar had died. The acknowledged godfather of World Music, Ravi looked set to make it to 100, but he did have a great life, and had three musical children. His son Shubho (who died in 1992) was also a sitar player but more introverted than the famous daughters, Anoushka and Norah. Ravi was due to receive a lifetime Grammy which will be awarded posthumously. He is also up against his daughter Anoushka in the [Best World Music](#) CD category.

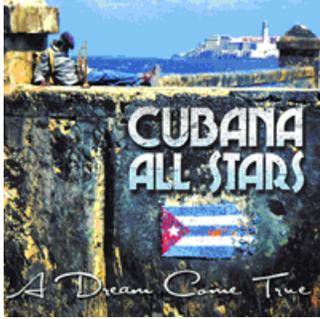
Here we have a film of one of his last performances, recorded October 2011. Ever the teacher, he explains the movements in English: *Alap*, *Jod*, though this time the tabla player, Samir Chatterjee, is not letting on what rhythm he will be using! --*Teental*, insists Ravi. The concert has familiar ragas and also some virtuoso playing where Ravi plays one number with damped frets: he changed the tone of his instrument with a towel over the strings. It was an experiment and I felt it failed, but even at 91 he was experimenting and that's a tribute to his genius. Fans may get this for sentimental reasons but will enjoy it for its music. The first number is a warm-up evening raga, but the second one (also an

evening raga) starts to blaze. Then there is a trade-off between his regular tabla player Tanmoy Bose and guest Samir Chatterjee. It's pretty wild, though I felt Chatterjee's kit was overamplified. The final number will also knock your socks off.

The most famous Indian after Gandhi, Ravi was fully engaged with the West. He met Yehudi Menuhin in 1952, and the duo recorded three albums together in the 60s. In addition to being one of the greatest violinists of the 20th century, Menuhin was also a yogi. The two friends had no problem bringing their different disciplines together to jam. While in London Ravi recorded the score for Jonathan Miller's *Alice in Wonderland*, starring the "Beyond the Fringe" crew along with John Gielgud, Wilfrid Brambell and co. The DVD (which finally came out in 2010) has a featurette with Shankar working in the playback studio. It was by no means Shankar's first soundtrack. The 1955 *Pather Panchali* suite is well-known and was a logical place to go for [memorial clips](#) when he died. However, his 1957 score for *Kabuliwala* (from a Rabindranath Tagore story) won the Silver Bear in Berlin, for "Extraordinary Film Music." It's also a delightful film (there were two remakes).

Shankar's influence was profound. He criticized jazz musicians for not properly learning Hindustani musical structures. One who did listen was John Coltrane who named his son after Ravi and, had he lived, planned to collaborate with him. Though his pupil George Harrison plays sitar badly on several Beatles songs, Shankar gave permission for long improvised solos to Western bands from which we can extrapolate the hours of acid jams we heard from the Fillmore and so on. Shankar was not pleased by the drug-taking he saw at the big rock festivals of the 60s. He was appalled at [Monterey Pop](#) in 1967 when The Who and Hendrix destroyed their instruments. This was sacrilegious. (Pennebaker's video of Ravi's morning raga is a bit like "Dark Passage" with Humphrey Bogart -- you are more than a third of the way into it before you see Alla Rakha & Ravi!) He was bemused by the applause for his 3-minute tuning up at the [Concert for Bangladesh](#) (Madison Square Garden, 1971), but he was extremely tolerant (after all the gig ultimately raised \$12m for the refugees)

and thanks to his kind indulgence we have come around to finally understanding him.



CUBANA ALL STARS
A DREAM COME TRUE (Viva Combo
Music VCD033)

This project is indeed the fulfillment of a dream. In the last half century many Cubans fled their homeland and settled in Miami, New York, Spain, and other places, bringing their music with them. Huge stars, like Celia Cruz & her Cottontops (Tito Puente &c), made their careers outside their native island. Producer Richie Viera had the idea to bring 40 top-flight Cubans back to Havana and cut a super-session at EGREM studios, along with some who didn't leave, like tresero Pancho Amat and guitarist Elaides Ochoa, who has won Grammys for his solo projects as well as his role in BVSC. The Cultural ministry waived the rules to allow back some musicians who have been critical of the Castro regime and made possible the return of Isaac Delgado from Puerto Rico, as well as Chocolate Armenteros and Xiomara Laugart from New York, among many others. The assembled stars lick out the jamjars on some classic tunes including Los Van Van's "Muévete," an inverted 12-bar (G, F, C9, G), which always makes me think of "Sympathy for the Devil." Another clear rock influence is the opening of "Xiomara," which unmistakably quotes "Sunshine of your love" on the horns. In order to give everyone a chance, several versions of some titles are included, featuring up to seven vocalists, so you get "Latin Diva" versions, instrumental versions, "Dos Amigos" versions etcetera. This is actually not so great as you end up with two almost identical albums unless you listen closely to distinguish the vocalists. It's an embarrassment of riches: they should either have invited fewer guests or had a wider repertoire. There are a lot of Los Van Van songs plus well-known hits by Adalberto Alvarez and others. The opener on both discs, "Preparate pa' lo que traigo (Get ready for what I am bringing)" is an all-out jam; the second version has a smoking tres solo from Pancho Amat, definitely one of the outstanding soloists on this Cuban instrument. I don't think you really need three takes of Albita's "Que manera de quererte," or "Muevete," though they certainly have fun on these classic cuts. The energy is high so I guess if