

Asia

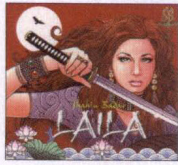
Shahin Badar Laila

Imprint Records IMP CD 007

Full Price (78 mins)

★★★★

Asian dance floor fillers from 50 Cent's tour mate



This is the debut solo album from a woman whose voice you may well have heard before, though you may not have realised it. Hers was the hypnotic chant featured on the number one hit single 'Smack My Bitch Up' by dance band The Prodigy; she has appeared on several Hollywood and Bollywood film soundtracks, as well as collaborating with AR Rahman and Jah Wobble and touring alongside 50 Cent and Mercan Dede. As the CV suggests, this is a British Asian artist who has straddled the boundary between the mainstream and the Asian music scenes.

So what has she come up with when left to her own devices? Classic dance music, of course. Several of the tracks on this 18-track album will find their way onto dance floors where they are sure to get people moving. They could be anywhere from Mumbai and Cairo, to London or New York, because Badar's is a contemporary, globalised sound that has elements of Indian, Arabic and Western music in it. If you like your music traditional, reverential and steeped in a sense of specific place, I doubt you will have even read this review, but for those brought up on dance music, it's a treat. It is not mired in that rather murky genre of blessed-out global grooves, but is cool, ethnically diverse, and never worthy or deliberately 'worldy'.

Nathaniel Handy

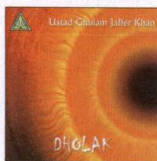
Ghulam Jaffer Khan Dholak

Sense World Music SWMCD108

Full Price (53 mins)

★★★★

Masterful Indian hand percussion



The *dholak* (double-ended drum) is very rarely heard in a full classical recital, being more usually associated with subcontinental folk music, and also provides the characteristic *filmi* accompaniment. The late Ghulam Jaffer Khan, captured here in his final solo concert, must have been something of an exception to many rules, sustaining a career in this instrument whilst having



Hwang Byungki The Best of Korean Gayageum Music

ARC Music EUCD 2097

Mid Price (68 mins)

★★★★★

As good as Korean traditional music gets



Hwang Byungki (b 1936) is the most celebrated of Korea's musicians and composers, a specialist on the most evocative of the country's traditional instruments: the 12-string *gayageum* (zither), also heard here in an updated 17-string version. Hwang's most celebrated compositions feature on four albums recorded in the 70s and 80s, which are still available in Korea and have been distributed

internationally by the Korea Foundation. This album features works from either side of the new millennium and two previously unrecorded 70s works, including *daegeum* flute and *kagok* lyrics as well as the zither itself. The later works here include the meditative 'Darha Nopigom', based on a children's song, 'Sigyetap' (The Clock Tower), recalling the hospital where Hwang was born, and 'Chahyangije' (Two Poems on the Fragrance of Tea), designed to accompany the tea ceremony. The two older compositions are the solo flute 'Jasi' (Night Watch), complete with a central spoken classical Chinese text, and the evocative zither-plus-voice arrangement of 'Moon of My Hometown'.

Compared to the four earlier albums, the compositions licensed here to ARC evoke Hwang's meditative, philosophical character, as he has matured into a contemporary equivalent to the classical scholar-musician of earlier times. Extensive liner notes are provided by Andrew Killick, a Sheffield-based scholar who has studied with Hwang for two decades. These are superb recordings of significant works played on the best-loved Korean instrument by its most celebrated living exponent.

TOP
OF THE
WORLD
ALBUM

TRACK
10
INTRODUCING

Keith Howard