

A beat-digging excursion to previously uncharted outposts of international psychedelia leaves Peter Shapiro in a mindwarp with his face melted



Kim Sun Kim Chu Ja With Shin Jung Hyun And The Men (1969)



Eskaton Ardeur (1980)



Staff Carpenborg & The Electric Corona *Fantastic Party* (early 70s)

**Psych Funk 101 (1968–1975):
A Global Psychedelic Funk Curriculum
Various**

World Psychedelic Funk Classics CD/LP
I have said it many times before, but I will say it again: there is no more exciting sound in music than the sound of a guitarist barely familiar with electric amplification – or, as evidenced on this fabulous compilation of syncretic out-there funk, a saz player trying to come to terms with a fuzzbox. Although *Psych Funk 101*, which features recordings from 1969–80 despite what the cover says, was compiled by mysterious hip-hop beat diggers, it is the sound of strings being ravished and ravaged by feedback that dominates the compilation, and marks it out as something more special than your run-of-the-mill rare funk selection. Of course, the converse is also true: the presence of big chunky beats and ludicrous juxtapositions also marks this out as something more than your run-of-the-mill rare psych comp.

A saz player bellydancing his way through the outer alleyways of consciousness appears on *Psych Funk 101*'s first track, "Su Derenin Sulari" by The Husnu Ozkartal Orkestrasi. This may be little more than the Turkish equivalent of some Alan Hawkshaw 'groovy' psych throwaway, but it's such

a glorious and unabashed celebration of pure sound that it's hard to deny. No one, not even Isaac Hayes, has done more with (or for) the wah-wah pedal than Ethiopian genius Mulatu Astatke. He appears here with "Alemye", a track that is perhaps too cluttered with keening female vocals, but has trademark wah-wah riffs that are somehow both cartoonish and also dramatic, stop-dead punctuation. In a more traditional psych vein, the obscure Greek outfit Petalouda's "What Can You Do In Your Life" sounds like a leftover from 2003's *Chains And Black Exhaust* compilation, while Kim Sun's "The Man Who Must Leave", a mostly lugubrious lover's lament, features paint-peeling guitar intros and outros from the legendary Korean six-string shaman and record dealer darling Shin Jung Hyun (seek out his live version of "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida", which is just bonkers) that exist in some hitherto unexplored region somewhere between Eddie Hazel, traditional kayagum and High Rise's stacks.

But fuzz and feedback are capable of more than just face-melting. Several artists use distortion pedals to envision strange and alien places in the dark corners of the Fourth World. Take for example, Mehr Pooya's "Ghabileh-Ye Lily", what sounds

like the score to a chase sequence from a 1974 Iranian cops and robbers movie that blends blaxploitation wah-wah, strings and phrasing with a Joe Cuba breakdown and hints of Persian airs, a track that puts Jon Hassell to shame in its imaginings of otherworldly psychogeographies. While Pooya clearly had an ear tuned to the West – check out his insane "Soul Raga" from 1970 for further proof – the guitarist clearly did not feel the funk the way Pooya did. The riff is clipped and stiff, but thanks to the wah pedal it sounds more twitchy and weird than any of the epoch's blaxploitation wah-wah riffs. Then there's Egyptian legend Omar Khorshid's stunning "Raket El Fadaa" – an epic virtuosic journey that encompasses Dick Dale, Greek wedding bands, Abdel Alim Hafez, Italian sex farce soundtracks, the Wurlitzer at a Blackpool roller rink circa 1972 and Hot Butter's Moog. Perhaps strangely, Gruppo Di Improvisazione Nuova Consonanza make an appearance here with 1970's "The Feed-Back", which features an atypically terse, fuzzed guitar riff from Ennio Morricone's sidekick Bruno Battisti di Mario, anchoring detailed gestural improvisation that recalls AMM with a backbeat.

Even without the fuzzbox, the artists on *Psych Funk 101* get pretty out there.

Armando Sciascia's "Circuito Chiuso" from 1970 is all ominous bass undertow, sickly keyboards and scything, echoing harpsichord stabs that prefigure Goblin's work with Dario Argento by several years. Elsewhere, the amazing French group Eskaton construct a spaceship to Venus out of base materials of Magma and Gentle Giant with some ethereal wordless female vocals lifted from a *Star Trek* episode.

Psych Funk 101 comes with sleeve notes that mimic the course descriptions of an American university catalogue. Whether you find the conceit amusing, clever or downright pretentious, the real question posed by this album is what on earth were the bosses of the German Maritim label smoking when they released Staff Carpenborg And The Electric Corona's *Fantastic Party* album? I ask not because of the music – which must be pretty freaky on the evidence of "All Men Shall Be Brothers Of Ludwig", included here; German session musicians trying to approximate Herbie Hancock's *Sextant* – but because it is contained in a sleeve reminiscent of an early 1970s *Top Of The Pops* budget compilation intended to accompany a wife swapping party, probably the most mindwarping thing here. □