

Ana Bacalhau, whose warm, effortless vocals captivate the listener through the good tracks, and keep you hanging on through a few middling ones.

Deolinda are at their best when things are kept simple. The opening track, 'Bons Dias', is an acoustic duet between Bacalhau's velvety voice and some deft guitar playing, and it establishes an easy-going vibe. Perhaps the difficulty thereafter is how to create variety across the 15 songs in order to avoid too much of a good thing. The sixth track, 'Desavindos', introduces guest performer Manel Cruz; it's not exactly Jane Birkin and Serge Gainsbourg, but Cruz's world-weary voice is a good foil for Bacalhau's and the backing strings work well. 'Canção Aranha' ups the tempo and has a distinctly Brazilian swing to it.

Much less successful, however, is 'Nunca é Tarde', which is weighed down by a drone of strings that crescendo into a wall of dissonance. It's a heavy-handed compositional affectation that makes you yearn for a return to the bare essentials with which the album opened.

MICHAEL MACAROON

TRACK TO TRY *Bons Dias*

## Elanor A Clear Look

Appel Records (54 mins)



*Belgians who open up middle-Europe to the wild seas*



Here's an interesting line-up: between them the five musicians of the Flemish band Elanor play alto

and soprano electro-acoustic hurdy-gurdies, bagpipes (both *uilleann* and *gaita*), wooden flute, accordion, acoustic guitar, and electric bass. Drones, then, are prominent in the music, over which they lay melodies in intricate patterns and swirls.

I hope they play for dances because their music certainly makes you want to move. It is rooted in traditional music, yet all 14 of these instrumental tracks have been composed by members of the band. As well as the dance tunes there are more expansive pieces, such as 'Mateke', that conjure an atmosphere of cafés and *moules frites* with mayonnaise. The arrangements range in mood and pace. They are witty and generous, allowing, in a jazzy way, each instrument a moment to shine.

The variety of instruments allows intriguing contrasts, with the pipes and

the wooden flute, so redolent of the West and the sea, holding down tunes such as 'Pour Elle' and 'Kotor' that sound continental and landlocked.

JULIAN MAY

TRACK TO TRY *Mateke*

## Harp and a Monkey War Stories

Harp and a Monkey (37 mins)

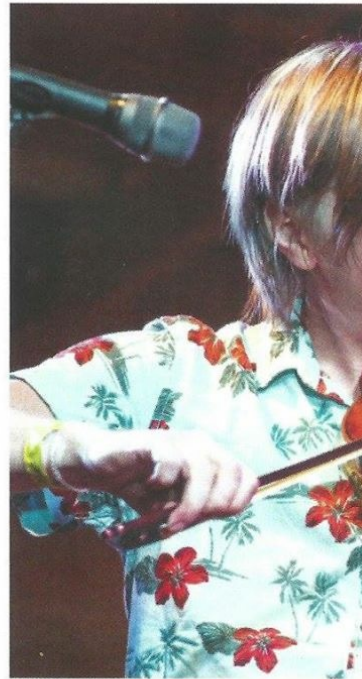


*Tales of conflict, from the sensitive to the quirky*



Lancashire-based Harp and a Monkey call themselves 'electro-folk-storytellers' and their songs

resonate with a strong sense of history coupled with a sharp eye for tales from lives less ordinary. The music here from published historian Martin Purdy

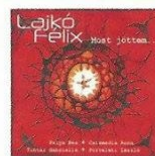


## Félix Lajkó Most Jöttem

Fonó (45 mins)



*The idiosyncratic Hungarian folk*



Félix Lajkó is Hungarian groundbreaking one of his best recordings. He inhabits an unique space between folk, jazz and experimental music. But, featuring

collaborators from the Hungarian folk recording is firmly rooted in the tradition. He plays violin and occasionally zither in his arrangements of traditional tunes like 'Verbunk', which features a lovely interplay between violin and zither. 'Verbunk', which might seem like a traditional title, is a Lajkó composition with traditional