

BORDER CROSSINGS

Once considered exotic, cross-cultural musical meetings in jazz are now commonplace. Musicians from all parts of the world are always keen to comingle and share their cultural experiences by jamming together. The following discs are two recent examples of this global reality.

Omar Sosa & the NDR Bigband: *Ceremony*

Otá Records OTA1021

★★★★☆☆

Ceremony is a meeting place of cultures, as the NDR (North German Radio) Bigband, firmly rooted in the American jazz tradition, takes on music composed by Cuban pianist Omar Sosa and arranged by Argentinean Jaques Morelenbaum. Mindful of the spiritual depth and African influences inherent in Sosa's music, Morelenbaum—who is also a cellist and composer and has worked with artists as diverse as Antônio Carlos Jobim and Ryuichi Sakamoto—more than



meets the amalgamation challenge: the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic layering of the pianist's music already lends itself to the big band format, and the cellist's arrangements serve to dramatically amplify the overall sound. The 18-piece band is joined on the album by Sosa and the other members of his quartet, Childo Tomas (Mozambique) on electric bass and the powerhouse percussion unit of Cubans Julio Barreto and Marcos Ilukán on drums and Afro-Cuban percussion, respectively. The album opens and closes with two new pieces by Sosa, "Llegada Con Elegba" and "Salida Con Elegba", honoring the arrival and departure of the divine Yoruba messenger and protector Elegba, both numbers featuring Morelenbaum on cello. In-between are expansive re-workings of eight previously recorded Sosa compositions showcasing several of the big band's soloists, with Sosa himself shimmering on piano and marimba throughout. **Sharonne Cohen**

Omri Ziegele *where's africa trio can walk on sand* Intakt cd 167 (www.intaktrec.ch)

★★★★☆☆

When the native Israeli saxophonist Omri Ziegele and the veteran Swiss pianist Irene Schweizer encounter the South African drummer Makaya

Ntshoko, bridging the cultural gap could be a tricky proposition.

Fortunately, all three have an equal interest in the music of Africa and jazz. In this recording, the trio performs 11 succinct pieces, the shortest lasting only 40 seconds, the longest clocking in at eight minutes. As a founding member of the 60s European Free Jazz movement, Schweizer never gave up on her jazz roots, remaining an unabashed admirer of Monk over the years. Her percussive and rhythmic style fit perfectly here, providing thrust to the alto player's flights of fancy. Apart from Ziegele's three originals, we hear tunes penned by such jazz notables as Ornette Coleman, Oliver Nelson, Mal Waldron, Gershwin ("Summertime" bent out of shape here in a version for solo sax), and items by the long departed South-African legends Chris McGregor (two cuts) and Johnny Dyani (one cut). Jürg Wickihalder, on alto and soprano saxes, provides some extra perk on three cuts. While Schweizer fans may find this outing somewhat tame, it still merits four stars as a guilty listening pleasure. **Marc Chénard**

