

Murray Bramwell's Reviews

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Womadelaide 2004

Womadelaide will soon be upon us: from 5 -7 March, to be exact. And, yes, it does seem like only a year ago. Now an annual fixture, Womad, this year, is tucked under the wing of the Adelaide Festival- as it was for its inaugural presentation back in 1992.

The appeal of this event is hardly a mystery - a diverse program of splendid music, impeccable production values, the green sward and shady Moreton Bay figs of Botanic Park and a very peaceable gathering of citizens who don't all have to be in the front row. As festivals go Womadelaide has redefined passenger comfort and opened our ears to the sounds of the planet.

Invariably the program is full of secrets and surprises - sometimes too many secrets and surprises. Exotic instruments, esoteric music traditions and a variety of languages and dialects. How do we get a handle on all this griot and tuva and klezmer and son ?

The Adelaide Review has assembled a punter's guide to Womadelaide 2004 - a sampling of CDs and some recommended highlights when you hit the park.

Dirty Lucy

Dark Green (Fish Dirt/MGM)

Led by singer Nicole Brophy and violinist Jodi Moore, Sydney outfit Dirty Lucy are every inch a contemporary girl band. That means that the raspy vibrato, the strummy guitar and the bittersweet lyrics are a little bit Ani diFranco, a dash of Kasey Chambers, a hint of Jewel and an echo of Leonardo's Bride. They are also augmented by some accomplished instrumentation - Jodi Moore's trickling mandolin on *Ride*, her soaring, echo-fed der-vish violin on *Rescue* and the hoe-down pace of *Can't Let Go*. *Dark Green* is an impressive debut and by all accounts the band has gained a keen following on tour in the US and Britain. They are likely to add Adelaide to

their list of admirers - especially when Jodi Moore hits that effects pedal on her six string violin.

Eliza Carthy

Anglicana (Topic)

As Americana describes that mix of tradition and the individual talent that characterises Gillian Welch and Wilco, so the ever-so-ironic *Anglicana* describes the place of Eliza Carthy in English music. Her parents, the legendary Martin Carthy and Norma Waterson, were themselves connected to the electric group Steeleye Span as well as the legendary Watersons band. Now it is Eliza's turn to make the old sound new again. It is not, however, the Doc Martins and the lip stud we should note but her bell-like voice, the authority of her arrangements and the deft choice of material. Teamed with Ben Ivitsky on guitar, John Spiers on melodeon and Jon Boden on second fiddle, Eliza Carthy recounts the melancholy fates of the *Pretty Ploughboy* and the *Bold Privateer* and then rosins the bow for a bunch of jigs. This is unerring musicianship- never shrill, never corny old folk crap. Those who saw Eliza Carthy play a gig in the Big Star basement a few years back will be first in the queue at Womad.

Abdullah Ibrahim

African Magic (Enja)

Known for thirty years as Dollar Brand before his conversion to Islam, South African pianist Abdullah Ibrahim remains a major figure in jazz as this vibrant set from 2002 attests. His elegant technique, influenced by Ellington and Oscar Peterson, also has echoes of his bebop debts to Thelonious Monk. Opening with the fragment *Blue Bolero*, Ibrahim, with bassist Belden Bullock and Siphon Kunene on drums, delivers twenty four tracks ranging from plaintive miniatures such as *Pule* and the sixteen second *Solitude* to the cross-hatched rhythms and bass cascades of *For Coltrane*. The magic here is African in its complexity but the sensibility is very much New York Modernism. At seventy, Ibrahim is better than ever. His set will be a Womad highlight, no risk.