

programming reasons, to provide variety for example. But the end result is that it's difficult to get a sense of the scope of any particular style unless you reshuffle the program order and pay serious attention. Ironically, this random ordering makes the artists more anonymous. With this amount of new and unusual material to process, it's easy to forget that one has already heard a particular singer ten tracks earlier.

Further, there appears to be little rhyme or reason to the selection process: while *apala's* seven tracks boast four different artists, all six *agidigbo* tracks are performed by the same ensemble, making it difficult to determine how representative this sampling may be. No criteria is provided. The Dairo package has similar problems.

One cannot seriously fault Mr. Roberts. He has been a one-man information source for many years, both through his books and through his quarterly Original Music catalog, which his well-informed and frankly rendered opinions have made essential reading. It is his ardent enthusiasm alone that has produced these discs, and for this he is to be applauded. Combined with Waterman's book, Chris Stapleton's *African Rock*, and recent recordings by Sunny Ade and Ebenezer Obey, scholars can for the first time have a reasonable survey of Nigerian pop music at their fingertips. Both recordings are essential additions to any library's world music collection. *Reviewed by Evan Ziporyn.*

Siya Hamba! 1950s South African Country and Small Town Sound
Original Music OMCD 003

American enthusiasm for the popular music of South Africa has waxed and waned over the decades. The late 1950s brought Miriam Makeba and the ubiquitous "Lion Sleeps Tonight". In the mid-1980s Paul Simon worked closely with top South African musicians from a number of different genres to produce the groundbreaking and top-selling "Graceland". He introduced an acappella men's choir, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, to the west, and they ended up doing Nike ads, without compromising their style.

This welcome phenomenon, which has abated somewhat over the past several years, represented an African/American cultural exchange come full circle. To a large extent, the qualities that allowed Americans to identify quickly with black South African music were borrowed from popular American traditions in the first place. The direct, simple harmonies of gospel, vaudeville, and, in turn 50s rock-and-roll had come to South Africa over the course of the century, and they blended nicely with indigenous forms and harmonies. Male choirs and vocal ensembles in general were a long-standing tradition in the region, and they readily adapted both repertoire and techniques. The American craze for *mbaqanqa* artists like Mahotella and Mahlatini Queens was a refracted form of nostalgia: our own past was exotically recast, regaining its freshness and innocence, at least in our perception of it.

The social history of music itself is more complicated, and extremely fascinating. Academic interest in *ischatimiya*, singing competitions among migrant workers that go on to this day, revealed native South Africans industrial workers in blackface and white gloves, singing reconstituted versions of American popular music in the early hours of the morning for a solitary white judge. The idea of black Africans using racist imagery in an unironic, enthusiastic manner is

difficult to digest, but the practice goes on. This incredible, surreal music can be heard on Rounder Record's *Mbube*; its development well-documented by scholars such as Veit Erlmann and Dale Cockrell.

Siya Hamba is an essential collection which fills two more gaps in our knowledge of South African music, specifically the popular music of the 1950s. The disc consists of cuts from the vast archive of Hugh Tracey, founder of the International Library of African Music, who spent four decades recording African music. It has been compiled and selected by John Storm Roberts, in many ways his spiritual successor. It is divided into two halves, "Country Sounds" and "Small Town Jump," and both provide revealing surprises, as well as being delightful listening.

As the title suggests, "Country Sounds" are field recordings from rural areas. Often recorded at general stores on home-made or mail-order instruments, the selections demonstrate the durability of African structures and sensibilities. Frans Ncha's "Adiyo Jaxo Kxaja Nkwe [You Can't Kill a Leopard with a Stone]" (Track 7), for example, proves that the autoharp - which according to Tracey was the most popular imported instrument in the country in the 1920s - can function as an ad hoc *mbira*. Similarly, "Amazeyiboka [Some Socks are Real Costly]" (Track 5) takes western harmony and treats it as cyclical and heterophonic, in a manner similar to the Bibiyak pygmies or the Venda of the northern Transvaal. Other selections provide links, real or imagined, to folk forms on either side of the Atlantic. Track 2, "Suta Tseleng (Get Out of the Way)", performed solo by Jacquot Mokete on harmonica and voice, seems an arranged marriage: the harmonica comes from the Mississippi, but the singing is in a different melodic mode, and not in the same meter. The result is both disorienting and hauntingly beautiful. Track 11, "Pinda Zimshaya [Hit Him Again]" is a prototypical version of *mbube* harmony, gruffer and more grounded, an artifact pointing to the older, lost vocal styles that preceded it.

"Small Town Jump" is equally compelling and a lot more fun. The social aspirations of black South Africans are well-reflected in this music, in which one hears traces of Louis Jordan and American swing. Three vocal groups, all with backing rhythm and horn sections, are represented on nine tracks. Like many African vocal ensembles, each has a distinct tuning and flavor. The rhythmic sensibility is borrowed from swing but not completely assimilated, and the result is unique, unforgettable, and highly sophisticated. The title track, Track 14, is representative, but each track alters the recipe slightly, and all are recommended.

Mr. Robert's notes are terse but knowledgeable, and his selections work well, leaving the listener both satisfied and hungry for more. One hopes he will continue making more of Hugh Tracey's recordings available in the west.

Reviewed by Evan Ziporyn.

Bill Monroe - The Music of Bill Monroe from 1936 to 1994

MCA MCAD4-11048

The multiple-CD box set rivals the postage stamp as the highest form of validation a popular artist can currently receive in American culture. Mandolin master Bill Monroe - known popularly if inaccurately as the father of bluegrass - certainly deserves both honors. A first-class judge of talent and a consummate player and arranger, Monroe and his Bluegrass Boys forged a style out of an