

The New York Times

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, JUNE 29, 2007

The New York Times



A Big, Wide World Of Music



Music from all over the world floods into New York City year round, but especially in summertime. That's when outdoor stages supplement clubs and theaters, and free concert series can introduce audiences to music with lower commercial profiles.

JON PARELES
MUSIC
This summer's world music concerts include return visits by superstars who will have expatriate fans singing along with hits, like the Brazilian songwriter Carlinhos Brown, who is at the Nokia Theater tonight, and the Mexican rock superstars Café Tacuba, at Central Park SummerStage on July 14. And because it seems that everyone wants to be heard in New York City, this summer also brings a rare event like the July 21 SummerStage concert of music by 12 acts from Su-

dan, which is now torn by civil war and genocide.

Not so long ago, world music — the usefully vague marketing category, not the music itself — romanced isolation. A new album or a concert promised a rare chance to share what people half a world away were dancing to all night long, or a ceremony formerly closed to outsiders or sounds shaped through generations of a particular family or a village. Of course, the fact that the music had traveled at all was the beginning of the end of that isolation, for both the musicians and their new audiences.

Now there's a circuit of world music festivals where Irish fiddlers regularly run into Guinean griots and Lebanese oud players. There are world music concert producers who draw connections across national

“[One] of the most notable world music CDs released over the last year.”

Jon Pareles 6/29/07

and stylistic boundaries, like the World Music Institute, whose continent-spanning Gypsy Caravan has now been preserved as both CD and documentary. Although world music performers are well aware of the importance of tradition, they aren't so purist that they're afraid to experiment. Why not, since their music is already being sampled and mixed by everyone from hip-hop producers to lounge D.J.'s, who care only about the sounds, not the pedigree.

Albums that were once stocked only by the most comprehensive record stores are now much easier to find than the surviving comprehensive record stores themselves, at online sites like calabashmusic.com and emusic.com. Information that used to be tucked into academic enclaves or shared by word of mouth is now eas-

ily accessible at sites like worldmusiccentral.org, afropop.org and worldmusic.nationalgeographic.com.

Meanwhile, musicological forays that once meant journeys deep into the outback — where satellite TV and Internet connections are now wreaking cultural changes — have been supplemented lately by visits to the archives of local labels. Hearing world music has always been a kind of vicarious travel, and now it's more like time travel than ever. What follows is a selection of some of the most notable world music CDs released over the last year. *

Continued on Page 5



NAWAL “Aman” (nawali.com)

Nawal sets her gritty voice to sparse, staccato patterns of upright bass, thumb piano and the banjolike gambusi on “Aman.” She is from the Comoros Islands, which are in the Indian Ocean between Africa and Madagascar, and her music is a personal fusion that draws on the repetitive power of Sufi chants, along with modal acoustic vamps that can sound both African and Arabic. Her songs are lean and incantatory, and they may benefit from a language barrier; every so often she deflates the music with a phrase in English, like “too much pollution.” But more often, she can be hypnotic.