

World/
Reggae

New releases by Ofra Haza, Alpha Blondy and more, are sure to please all world music tastes

England's Cold Cut Crew put Israeli pop diva Ofra Haza on the world music map with an unauthorized sample of her "Im Nin'alu" on its remix of Eric B & Rakim's "Paid In Full." But when she followed her breakthrough album, *Fifty Gates of Wisdom* (Shanachie) with a pair of Middle Eastern Madonna albums for Sire/Warner Bros., the public shrugged.

Now she's returned to Shanachie and her Yemenite roots on *Kirya*, produced by Don Was with a guest recitation by Iggy Pop. "Daw Da Hiya," she says, "is based on a story about a young woman who was stoned to death because of her love. On this song I wanted a man with a low voice to talk, and Don said, 'What about Iggy Pop?' I didn't know him personally, but for me, he was somebody really wild. So he came to the studio, and I discovered a wonderful person."

Recorded in L.A. with members of Haza's band and Was (Not Was), *Kirya* blends East and West, Hebrew and English, jerrycan drums and synthesizers. Haza's strikingly pure, seductively lilting voice blossomed in a Tel Aviv slum, where she listened to Barbra Streisand records and her mother's traditional wedding songs. Immigrants from Yemen, whose isolated Jewish community preserved its ancient



Ofra Haza

culture, her parents also inspired "Trains Of No Return," written during the Persian Gulf war. "When I saw my mother and father wearing gas masks," she says, "my mind flashed back to the Holocaust. And this song is to tell people that things like that could still happen."

In other world music related news, Côte D'Ivoirean reggae great Alpha Blondy makes a big rebound from a couple of lackluster albums with *Masada* (World Pacific). Once again on par with his masterworks *Jerusalem* and *Aptirtheid*

releases from reggae's two finest producer/artists. Niney the Observer internationalizes his mix on the modernized *Freaks*, while Lee Perry adds his current righteous ramblings over a dozen classic Coxsone riddims on *The Upsetter and the Beat*.

Larry Birnbaum
Doug Wendt

Also new on Columbia is a distinctive female trio from Eritrea and Ethiopia. On *Midi,Maxt and Efti's* self-titled debut, they lend a modern dance groove to many reggae-flavored originals including "Bad Bad Boys," "Sisterhood of Africa" and "Poppadink Tribe." Get it quick for a little "Jamma on da Savannah!"

Meanwhile, Jamaican DJ Don Supercat rocks hard with his U.S. debut *Don Dada* (Columbia) featuring his influential chanting with guests Heavy D, Trevor Sparks and Frankie Paul. "Get Red Hot" leads the list of 14 smokin' selections.

Mandatory on Heartbeat are new

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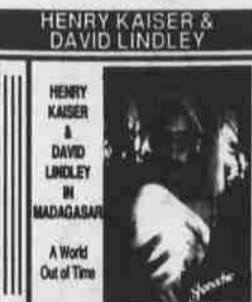
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OFRA HAZA - "Kirya" - Ofra Haza returns with this stunning release co-produced by Don Was and features guest vocals by Iggy Pop. "Ofra Haza carries her paradise with her ... there's no need to translate the songs she sings. The strikingly pure tone of her voice gets the meaning across." - *Philadelphia Inquirer*



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