

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY TRAVELOG

Corina Bartra Blue Spiral Records

"This new album by singer Corina Bartra is far-out, even among jazz aficionados ... the music here has a commanding, cohesive sound."

The New York Daily News

Corina Bartra's TRAVELOG is a journey of the spirit, the heart, and the ear. Traversing known and unknown territories, it challenges borders not only musical, rhythmic and tonal, but ethnic, international, and cosmic as well. Bartra consistently explores exciting new geographies, with elemental familiars as guides. Earth and fire, trees and sky, mountains and forests, rivers and the sea are all characters in Bartra's music. They speak with her voice as she chatters, careens, sizzles and soars with resonant magnificence.

Born in Peru, Bartra has sung and studied in London, Paris, and New York City. Her voice is part jazz, part ethnic, part new-wave experimental. One fumbles searchingly for comparisons in many different styles and tastes: the whole range of American jazz singers, of course, as well as, specially, Brazil's legendary Elis Regina, beloved ethnic originals like Egypt's vocal dynamo Om Kalsoum, even a leading experimenter from New York's downtown multi-media scene, Meredith Monk, a true soul mate of Bartra' distinctive multi-cultural, multi-level approach to the voice as a virtuoso instrument.

Still Bartra's world is uniquely her own. Her voice quickens with an inner life and power, an idiosyncratic line and phrasing that makes her completely her own woman. It is a voice that travels all over the map - sliding and gliding, skimming over shimmering surfaces, then driving deep down in the depths, bouncing and rolling, hesitating and galloping - at all kinds of speed, to all kinds of tempos, in all kinds of moods. Corina's use of the voice as a highly sensitive prophetic instrument is pioneering the realms of both Afro-Peruvian music and vocal jazz. Her bold, unpredictable improvisations with her band have no comparison among the contemporary jazz scene.

Her themes and lyrics, like her sounds, often take an intriguing detour as well. "American People are on the Rise" insists gently, with affirmative, quiet powers sounding like anything but a political call to arms, it surprises with all the gentleness of a love song or a rhythmic lullaby. "Warriors of the Sun" squarely faces a different battle. "The call to be whole and grow." The stereophonic drums of "Aruhe," draws the listener immediately into the primal world of the forest pan-piper, a "wildman ... freedom in tune with the wind."

Bartra is an uncompromising original, and on this new CD, she travels with friends in first-rate arrangements that serve the voice and the music as well. She also travels with protection; a vocal sense of herself that astonishingly pushes back or ignores boundaries because she senses exactly where she wants to go.

Bartra knows that real music - essential music - is a vessel as well as a tool, that the voice can be both the horse and the rider in this TRAVELOG to new worlds fashioned excitingly from old worlds we've known, plus some we've probably forgotten, and others which we may not even yet have imagined.

- Rob Baker