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- STYLE
- FILM
- MUSIC**
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- FUN
- CLASSIFIEDS
- NEIGHBOURHOODS
- MOBILE

- Features
- Street Spirit
- On Disc
- Live Eye
- Concert Chart
- Interview
- Videos
- 3 N Out
- Totally Wired

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vijay iyer trio  
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## Holiday Music Guide: Jazz/World reviews

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BY CHRIS BILTON AND DAVID DACKS December 02, 2009 21:12

Vijay Iyer \*\*\*\*\*

Historicity

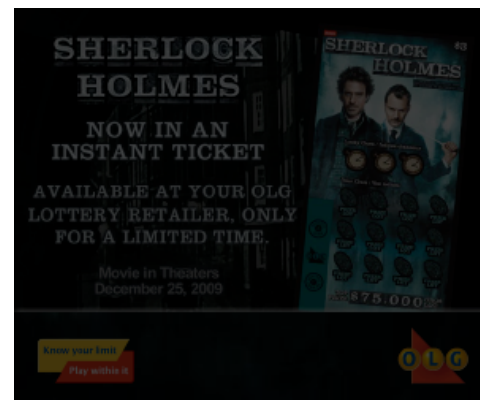
ACT MUSIC

Vijay Iyer is one of the few jazzers who not only breathes new life into the genre, but who cranks the defibrillators to 11 and gets jazz's pulse racing like it was 50 years younger. The New York-based doctoral physicist/pianist is probably one of the most harmonically inventive and virtuosic musicians around. He's also exquisitely tasteful and entirely listenable, to which his newest trio effort, *Historicity*, is another stunning testament. Between the Brad Mehldau-esque take on classic Broadway ("Somewhere") and funky tracks that never go full fusion (M.I.A.'s "Galang") – also waiting until about midway through the disc before heading to the avant side of the force – Iyer and his band maintain both a perfect tension and an intense perfection. » CB

Mahala Rai Banda \*\*\*\*\*

Ghetto Blaster

ASPHALT TANGO



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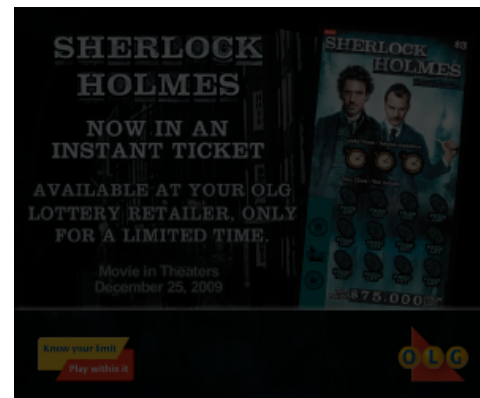
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This Roma brass band is notable for incorporating a Western-style rhythm section of electric bass and drum kit into its fabric. Mahala Rai Banda represent a younger cohort of musicians from Romani musical havens Clejani and Zece Prajini, and they play their music with greater attitude. Mind you, it’s not quite Gogol Bordello attitude: this Banda trades in fiendishly funky, high-energy grooves with many sample-worthy moments, as horn lines quiver overtop a dense base of hammered dulcimer, hand percussion and a rock-solid rhythm section. The telltale groove to OutKast’s “Hey Ya!” (surely one of the most globally influential beats of this decade) even lights up several of their songs. Though the vocal phrasing is a little uninspired at times, Ghetto Blaster is still a splendid party disc. » **DD**

**Viviane Houle \*\*\*\*\***

**Treize**

**DRIP AUDIO**

Viviane Houle is a vocalist possessed of incredible skill and range, and Trieze finds her captured in 13 spontaneous duo encounters with West Coast improvisers. From insane cackling to rich jazz intonations to distorted spoken-word passages, Houle is utterly captivating in every context; whether she is the focus of a song or an equal partner with her collaborators, she expertly defines each space. This recording also ought to give some shine to the specific talents of her mates: saxophonist Coat Cooke, guitarist Ron Samworth and laptop operator Stefan Smulovitz really stand out, and Jesse Zubot’s warm production makes this one of his finest of many on the always-inventive Drip Audio label. Note: some will find this album utterly unlistenable. Five stars anyways. » **DD**

**Hardal \*\*\***

**Nasil? Ne Zaman?**

**SHADOKS**

By 1979, rock was almost passé in Istanbul, and Hardal was one of the few bands keeping the faith. They often resemble pop-prog titans of Brazil of a slightly earlier vintage, namely Milton Nascimento and Som Imaginario. Catchy, fuzz-toned hooks, portentous arrangements and epic guitar solos are delivered with absolute, and sometimes risible, sincerity. Best of all, Hardal capture Let’s Take It To The Stage-era Funkadelic’s arena-rock boogie, complete with spacey synth leads. The Allman Brothers, Fleetwood Mac and Frank Zappa all make imaginary cameos. The energy flags a bit towards the end, but prog fanatics will find this a worthy soundtrack to many a hot-knife session. » **DD**

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