

## CD releases

### Orqestra Mahatma

Stay Cool

★★★★★



(Babel) £11.99

One of those sessions that occasions headscratching among those who can't help wrestling with jazz definitions – the wayward but unfailingly musical Orqestra Mahatma has at least three fully paid-up jazz musicians in it, but plays music sprung from Spanish, French, Bulgarian, Macedonian and Latin-American as well as jazz inspirations. The third Mahatma album, *Stay Cool*, is full of delectable melodies, and the spirit of all manner of music is caught without mockery by violinist Sonia Slany, violinist/guitarist Stuart Hall, bassist Thad Kelly and drummer Paul Clarvis. An opening on Duke Ellington's lazily-sensuous *The Mooche* is maybe a little misleading – there aren't many other explicit visits to blue-note slurs or walking basslines on the set, but Stuart Hall's guitar solo emphasises not just how versatile but how shrewd at avoiding the usual melodic suspects this underratedly gifted performer is. Rabih Abou-Khalil's *Sunrise in Montreal* eases out of the finale of *The Mooche*, opening with Hall in Bill Frisell mode and, as with Abou-Khalil himself, the interpretation veers all over the place – into Middle-Eastern dance-music, then to South Africa. *Jota de Porto* finds the common elements in Spanish and Scottish melody. The extended *Longa Farfisa* is more of a solo and improv vehicle while *Appalachian Waltz* and *Alabama Jubilee* wittily bend the country feel. World-jazz of immense character. **John Fordham**  
\* *Download: The Mooche; Jota de Porto*