



Rare vintage recordings from a Greek underworld

Arko Records are truly delighted to be able to present this unique album. Compiled by Charles Howard, an Englishman based in Greece, who has previously compiled a number of excellent collections for American Rounder Records and the British Heritage label, it has been carefully remastered from the best available copies of the original 78s by sound engineer Ted Kendall, well-known for his remastering of, among others, Django Reinhardt's recordings.

This is music usually called 'rembétika', Greek music from an urban sub-culture mainly performed by musicians hailing from Piraeus and/or Asia Minor during the first half of the 20th century.

The songs on this CD were recorded between 1927 and 1946 in Greece, Germany and the USA. There is also a real surprise in this collection, a contemporary recording of an older musician who, though he died very recently, was a true representative of this tradition rather than a 'revivalist'.

Mortika includes a 50-page book with exclusive photographs of the singers and musicians, complete lyrics of all songs both in the original Greek and in English translations, discographical data, and extensive information on the artists, on the instruments, and on several other aspects of the music.

The artists represented on this CD span from those well-known at the time, such as the 'Patriarch of the Bouzouki', Markos Vamvakaris, Rita Abádzi, one of the finest Greek singers of all time, and Jack Halikiás, bouzouki recording pioneer, to more obscure musicians such as Frangískos Zouridákis or the mysterious figure known as 'Kostis'.

The lyrics are particularly worth studying for their raw, direct quality. They touch on typical underworld themes such as drugs, theft, murder and prison, but also on such general themes as unrequited love and having a good time.

As well as fantastic singing you will hear many different instruments: bouzouki, baglamas, mandolin, mandola, accordion, violin, guitar, and santouri; and even worry-beads against an ouzo-glass.

What are mórtika?

The word 'mortis' in Greek underworld slang refers to a person who is both tough and elegant, the cool bearer of knife and suit. Mortika simply means songs about male 'mortes' and female 'mortisses'.

From Arko records:

Mortika

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ARKOCD008

Den Flygande Bokrullen

Den Flygande Bokrullen
ARKOCD001
20th Century Klezmer
ARKOCD002
Electronic ep
ARKOCD004
Tarrschwein
ARKOCD005

Happy Hammond in Slumberland

Happy Hammond in Slumberland
ARKOCD003

the pohjolas

Keep my eyes but don't pin and mount them
ARKOCD006
I cracked my head on a rock
ARKOCD007



ARKOCD008

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