

fROOTS

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LILA DOWNS

Lila Downs Y La Misteriosa En Paris
Live À FIP World Village WVF479027

I've always been a bit of an agnostic when it comes to Lila Downs. She's blessed with a powerful and versatile voice and clearly loves and feels the musical culture of her Mexican homeland. And yet there's often a distancing theatricality about her recorded work, she puts on different voices for different songs and I just want to shout 'Get on with it!' Thankfully, this is just what she does for most of this live recording, made in a Paris radio studio last year; 15 songs mixing her imaginative interpretations of Mexican standards, some originals and a Lucinda Williams cover. Downs sings it straight in the main, just occasionally lapsing into vocal affectation and boy can she sing, there are a couple of points where she lets rip with a long, sustained note that just take the breath away. Her band deserve equal billing, they've got strong Mexican roots but are able to slip in a bit of funk, reggae and klezmer without upsetting the *manzana* cart. The harp and accordion players are particularly impressive and there's a very occasional burst of rawk guitar so brief as to be excusable. So hallelujah! I think I've seen the light when it comes to Lila D (and I think I'd very much like to see her live too); anyone who can breathe new life into a hoary old Mex standard like *La Cucaracha*, whilst simultaneously returning the song to its revolutionary roots, is alright by me.



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Jamie Renton