

SONGLINES

JUNE 2010

Lila Downs En Paris – Live at FIP

World Village WVF009

Full Price (69 mins)

★★★★

Fiery French gig from Mexico's folkloric diva



Lila Downs, with her unique blend of original songs and reworked classics emphasising human-rights politics, is one of Mexico's great 21st century singers. That's why the Chieftains and Ry Cooder kick off their recent *San Patricio* album with Downs singing 'La Iguana.' This live recording from Paris captures the beauty and exuberance of her music; Downs' approach has always been magical and this fluent performance is like a 'Best Of' disc. It embraces a host of signature songs, from the spirited 'Cumbia del Mole' celebrating the emblematic chilli-chocolate sauce of her native Oaxaca, to a feisty re-take of that old beastie 'La Cucaracha.' We hear Downs shape-shifting her voice across all its glorious variety – from the tender 'La Martiniana' to a 'Paloma Negra' complete with a classic *ranchera*-style extended long-note. The politics remain strong, as heard on 'Justicia,' dedicated to those Latin American countries where injustice and inequality are rife.

Downs leads a dynamic group of international musicians here, and there are thrilling solos throughout – notably from harpist Celso Duarte on 'Los Pollos' and on Bolivian *charango* lute on 'Justicia.' The wild finale, a Gypsy-style 'Perro Negro' features terrific klezmer accordion from New Yorker Rob Curto and trombone from Venezuela's Dana Leong. The richness of it all really comes across when properly blasted out your stereo: this is the next best thing to being at an actual Downs gig.

Jan Fairley



The vivacious Lila Downs lets loose during a live show