

40 ART NOW By Melissa Hekkers



Grippy Grappa

Monsieur Doumani's debut album of traditional folk inspired music will be released next week and distributed world-wide

Soon after their return from the Ferrara Buskers Festival in Ferrara last August, local trio Monsieur Doumani began working on their debut album 'Grippy Grappa' to be launched in Nicosia and Limassol next week.

Active for the past two years, the trio's journey into reviving traditional Cypriot folk music sees Antonis Antoniou (tzouras), Aggelos Ionas (guitar) and Dimitris Yiasemides (wind instruments) come together from very different musical backgrounds yet all influenced by Cypriot folklore on various levels.

"Even though our musical education was mainly oriented towards Western musical paths, neither of us has ever ignored the simplicity, the beauty and the unique melodies of our land's traditional music," explains the trio.

Locally, their name has gradually started surfacing on the alternative music scene through selected live performances predominately in the capital, with their demo album 'CYfolk' having only been released on their small tour in Italy, as opposed to the full length album which will be available as from Wednesday.

Monsieur Doumani focus on rearranging Cypriot traditional songs, adding their own particular colour to the sound and feeling of particular songs. Having been characterised as a Cypriot folk band with a twist, the group compose their own songs in the Cypriot dialect, which are inspired by contemporary Cypriot society, such as the recent financial crisis that hit the island.

It is this uniqueness that Monsieur Doumani has focused upon, enriching traditional songs with new arrangements, melodies, rhythms and sounds and crafting a distinctive style of their own. Their work is performed in such a way that it pleasantly surprises those who are familiar with the original music and triggers a greater curiosity in Cypriot audiences and yet has the potential to thrill non-Cypriot audiences. The group's announcement denotes: "The traditional element is highlighted in the album Grippy Grappa, through the diversity of musical styles echoed in the group's fresh and daring approach to the Cypriot folklore.

"While fully respecting traditional Cypriot music, Monsieur Doumani creates its music under the prism of experimentation. They deconstruct the elements that constitute a traditional song and then proceed in re-viewing and rebuilding them, making new associations, forming new balances and possibilities. All the above elements are combined with a generous dose of refined musical humour, creating a sense of alertness and devotion, while any established forms are shaken away in a rather unpredictable and often abrupt manner."

As a means of expression, lyrics are also a vital element to folk for which the trio amounts equal importance to and also tampers with to a certain extent. Although, in the case of Cypriot folk music, "its lyrics and music are not specific at all -especially since we only based ourselves on recordings from the 60s onwards. It's quite definite that each song was sung with a varied melody as well as lyrics in different areas of Cyprus and that many of these songs are not even rooted in Cyprus but in Minor Asia and many other places...we sometimes tamper with the lyrics too, at different levels; sometimes changing a word for another, sometimes omitting

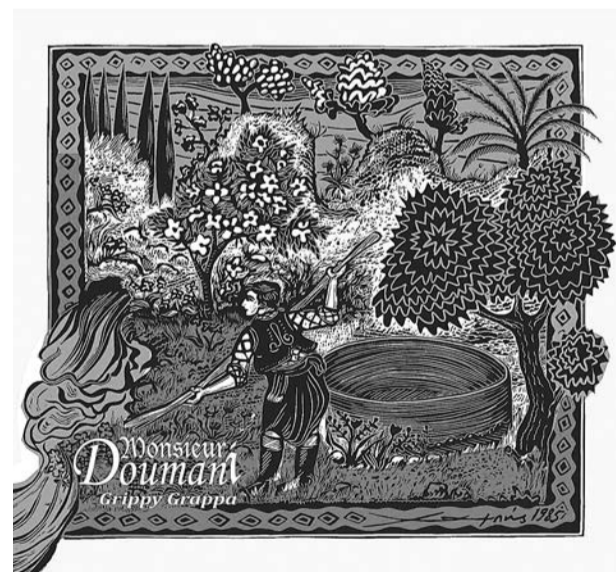


a whole verse and so on," the trio explained before their appearance at Ferrara.

The lyrics in their original work also maintain folk tradition's word of mouth custom, and transcend stories told in contemporary society, but also derived from personal experiences the group has endured. Grippy Grappa is comprised of 11 covers of traditional Cypriot songs plus three original compositions: "Ahaparos", a satirical song with music and lyrics by Antonis Antoniou which was inspired by an unfortunate incident that the group experienced at a festival in Cyprus last year. The second song titled "Peakin Myroaton", also composed by Antoniou, gives the listener a first taste of what their next album will sound like. The song's lyrics in the Cypriot dialect are caustic and satirical commenting on the recent financial crisis in Cyprus, and moving on a traditional-style melodic lines 'dressed' with electronic elements.

Grippy Grappa also attests to the Cypriot home-made DIY culture or productions in the music industry, as it was recorded in one of the band member's home studio. Yet this hasn't stopped the trio from being represented world-wide by the international distributor Proper Music Distribution, the largest independent distributor in the UK, which provides top quality distribution services to over 1000 labels from around the world.

Having been voted by festival goers as the third favourite band of the Ferrara Buskers Festival out of 20 European bands, Monsieur Doumani have been embraced by audiences, regardless of language and cultural barriers abroad. Having the opportunity to enjoy them 'at home' should not be shunned.



The album is sold on the group's website www.monsieurdoumani.com and at selected shops in Nicosia - Kala Kathoumena, New Division and Yiousouroum.

Grippy Grappa debut album release, 15,16 & 17 May, 9pm, Kala Kathoumena, Nicosia, May 19, 9pm, Yiagkini (Saripolou square), Limassol. For reservations for Nicosia shows call 99588942.

All concerts will have an entrance fee of €10 with a free "Grippy Grappa" CD. For more information visit www.monsieurdoumani.com