

Mp3 Armando Mafufo - Uncle Mafufo's Tribal Tales



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Tribal Tales: Mostly Doumbek and frame drums in tribal style, interpretive fusions and classical bellydance. 11 MP3 Songs WORLD: Belly Dancing, WORLD: Middle East Contemporary Show all album songs: Uncle Mafufo's Tribal Tales Songs Details: This CD from the Mafufo Percussion Ensemble takes listeners into an entirely new realm conjured by Armando, aka Uncle Mafufo. The talented "ensemble" consists of Armando, who shows us a whole new side of himself heretofore unknown - that of melody player! For he is the sole musician on this whole album. Instruments played by Armando while weaving this spell include: arghool, bells, bendir, bongos, caja, claves, clay pot, conga, cymbals, darbuka, defs, maracas, nakaras, ney, palitos, tabl, tabla, santur and zills. As you can see, all the instruments are acoustic and organic You will not hear any synthesized, electronic, computer-enhanced or plastic sounds. Personally, that is a quality I look for in all my favorite albums. I want it "real"- and this album is that. Armando had been working on this album for about two years before its Fall 2000 release. Often the songs came to him as pictures, or scenes, in his mind's eye. "I love courtyards. A lot of my songs take place in courtyards. There's always water present, too, a fountain. Often moonlight," he explains. "I would get ideas - pictures - and start working on the song. I would work on some and let others go. I knew what I wanted to do. I could hear it. So I just did 'em." This album is pure Armando. It is a glimpse of a wonderful man whose purpose is to share joy with his music, straight from his heart and soul to yours. Each track on this album is danceable and useful for soloists and troupes. I feel nearly all the songs are suitable for tribal style, interpretive fusions and classical bellydance. Some titles seem best for choreography. I can see some dynamic group numbers going on to some of these, while others lend themselves to a slow tribal improvisational jam. Still others seem great for soloists as drum solos - and there's places in many songs that allow for soloists to step forth from a group if they should want to. It's

quite rare to find an album so versatile, as readers are no doubt aware. I feel this is true for this album because each song has many possible interpretations. They seem to be musical "suggestions"- not demanding that the dancer produce any preconceived style other than what comes from within herself. In the following descriptions I hope to give you a sense of what came to me while listening to this soulful collection. "Saludos," means "Greetings" in Spanish. The song is in an unusual Tunisian 4/4 rhythm, Saadawi Thani. It sounds a bit like a 6 to me. Each time I listen to this, it immediately evokes a hot, lazy spice market scene in my imagination. I can almost smell it cookin' -carried in on a cool reed and drone breeze. As if taking a pause for some minty refreshment, a drum break surprises me with the extra flavor before pouring me back into the sauntering desert pace. "Joydance" is all percussion. It could be a great drum solo all on its own, and is suitable for a group choreography. It's a good medium fast tempo with simple breaks and accents, before the end changes feel and goes into a more complicated "sharki-like" drum solo with many levels and textures of sound before a 2/4 finale. "In the Shade" has an entirely different feel to it. This is one that Armando envisioned a courtyard scene during while writing it. He says he feels it "was a very hot day, and these people came to their courtyard to find shade against the wall. There are trees and a fountain that refreshes them. The water jug you hear is what someone picked up to play while they rested." This song features the ney, and is in another 4/4 time signature. It feels soft and rolling to me, light and airy like the perfume of jasmine wafting over that wall on a late summer breeze. Yet it is not foolish or dallying, as can be associated with the quality of air in music, but rather feels more deeply grounded and mature. "Tanta Bariga," means "A lot of (or 'Much') Belly." Armando describes it as "the dance of the fuzzy wuzzies. I pictured modern dancers, running, jumping and standing still," he explains. Its rhythm he calls a "Palito 4/4," because it's played with little sticks called palitos, which is a Cuban and Puerto Rican term for these instruments. To me, it has a metallic drum sound, that seems to contain many different, complicated parts, like a puzzle. It has an "African-Island" feel to me, and I see jungles when I hear it. I'd choose to use it as a slow piece, I think. It would be great for a dramatic or theatrical floor or sword dance, featuring one or many dancers. It also seems to be asking for fire as a prop. That would be appropriate in my opinion. I'd choose to really draw out my moves, letting this music roll over, in, around and through my dance - adding unexpected quick moves in strategic places. "Bajo la Luna," or "Under the Moon" is one of my favorite tracks on this album. It begins with a nice, one-and-a-half minute ney solo for an intro. Meditative as the ney is, breathy - a side of Armando I hadn't

seen. A mellow 6/8 Shabia rhythm on bendir and defs, with other sinewy and organic percussion enters, keeping this Moorish one smooth. Like an Andalusian afternoon, or a very late night's morning. One can literally hear the tinkling moonlight..... There is a sacred quality to the ney in this song, that speaks to something ancient. Armando was thinking of Garcia Lorca, who wrote: "The moon is a black hole. The flowers don't mean anything. What means something is your arms at night when they embrace me." As if making love, this song speeds up a bit in the last 30 seconds, to relax again into an easy finish. "Solo Numba 9" has the first "Dum Dum tek a tek" (Maksoum) you'll hear on this CD! It comes at you in a medium tempo, all Egyptian tabla talking. Other percussion such as a def, riq and darbuka lend their distinct sounds as Armando fills it in. The tempo picks up just over half way, then changes one more time for a bouncing Ayoub finale. This would be a fun drum solo, or the first part could make a haunting troupe number with the last part as a solo or tight group piece. "Foolindabul" is a 12/8 Buleria rhythm. Fast fingers and rapid ripples characterize this great new interpretation of the traditional flamenco rhythm. A consistent wooden tapping reminds me of Polynesia, yet the distinct Andalusian feel is also there. This is another one I'd probably use as a slow piece, but certainly there are many possibilities. Another total favorite of mine is "Round the Fire." It's a 6/8. I love this one! A lazy frame drum holds it all down as it's accompanied by resonant reeds. It feels perky, but not lilting - the reeds are attention-grabbing but not overbearing. It is a perfectly balanced desert song, and it does give me the feel of those fireside jams where all is right with the world and you wish the moment would never end. One of those jams where no one is talking with their mouths, but everyone has something good to say.... Later, a deeper percussive break asserts itself ("One of the strangest drum solos I've ever done!" exclaims Armando), but still the frame drum holds the feel. Soon our reed rejoins, tying it all together again. In case you felt all mellowed out and content after that fireside jam, and thought of heading for your tent for the night, this one'll make you think again! It's "Dragon Dance," and one can almost feel the flames shooting from the mouth of the beast as the familiar Maksoum beat keeps you rooted. This rooted quality of the rhythm allows you to digress into the intricate finger cymbal and drumbeat patterns that grow out of it like so many sparks from its core. "Recuerdos" means "Memories" or "Recollections." It's a Bolero 4/4 and features the santur. The intro is all santur - gorgeous, haunting, ethereal and plaintive. Or contemplative. Perfectly placed pauses add volumes to this takseem of almost 3 minutes. If sunlight pouring through bright green leaves had a sound, it would be something like this. Then, the Bolero kicks in - easy and soft. Crispy wooden claves

are polite and respectful of the delicate voice of the santur. They hold the beat like the boulders in a stream, without which the water of the melody might lose its support. Never insistent or forceful, simply steady and relaxed. This song calls for the dancer/s to surrender to it in order to do it justice. Just beautiful! "Adios, Aloha, Salam" needs no translation. Another favorite of mine, this has that classic "Sahidi strut" sort of feel, very royal and queenly. More of that wonderful arghool reminds me of "Round the Fire" in the beginning of this tune, but more structured somehow. It feels more "North African" to me. I suppose I could think of the difference in feel between these two songs as instead of the almost somnambulant communication between the ensemble in the former, the musicians had a cool shower and some coffee before they recorded this one. The feel is more - present, or alert. Soon quick shimmy accents push their way to the forefront for layering your slow moves or for peppering your piece in other ways while you dance, before a return to the arghool melody. But the accents don't leave you after this appearance, they just retreat a bit, allowing the dancer/s to decide what they'll choose to bring out of the song next. Several of the songs have strategically placed pauses for drama and interest. I find these to also be places to get into or out of the songs while planning your dance sets. Each track's rhythm and length of time is noted on the jacket for your convenience in editing your routines as well. The moods and flavors of the varied songs on this CD are sure to be useful for dancers and listeners who like something out of the ordinary to challenge and delight. It was "inspired by music played outdoors: around campfires, under shaded trees, by oceans, by rivers; endless warm nights shared with many tribes playing music and dancing 'til the dawn." KAJIRA

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