

Mp3 Compilation - Strange Land, Volume 1



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The sound of modern Asia. A melting pot of an album from a melting pot of a place. Inspired by ancient musical traditions and today's shrinking globe, a community of musicians and producers living in Singapore explores a wide range of styles. 17 MP3 Songs

WORLD: Asian, **JAZZ:** Smooth Jazz

Details: Strange Land is the first in a series of compilation albums focusing on the current work of an international community of musicians and producers living in Singapore, a group of people of various races, ages, linguistic backgrounds, and musical talents. Unique convergences take place in Singapore. As varied as is the talent pool in a place like Los Angeles, or Paris, or Tokyo, most of the music on Strange Land couldn't have been made anywhere but Singapore.

ARTISTS: Julaiha is a 34-year-old Singaporean woman of Indonesian descent whose jazz-pop world music maintains a strong Indonesian influence. My Answer is Julaiha's recommendation for dealing with adversity. Its Malay lyrics are about bravery and acceptance. What sounds a little like Rap is the influence of Dikir Barat, a traditional Malay music-and-movement form. The musical texture includes the sampled sounds of the Javanese Gamelan orchestra playing motifs from traditional pieces, and several subtle layers of Kalimba, the African thumb piano, played by Mohamed Noor Bin Syed Yakob. What sounds like a drum set is a box drum, which is exactly what its name makes it sound like. You might have seen one on American Idol. Singapore guys have been playing gigs with them for a long time, and Mohamed Noor started that. (His profile is below.) Zapin Besok is a hip-hop-influenced update of the traditional Malay music-and-dance form called Zapin, which is itself a localized update of a middle-eastern form. Julaiha's entirely improvised vocal floats between a wordless approach and the Arabic in which she prays. My Answer and Zapin Besok are from Julaiha's upcoming album, Bisikan. Alemay is one of Singapore's rising jazz talents, but here lends her soulfulness to a happy dance track called Message Me, a love song for users of text messaging. (Texting

is very popular in Singapore.) Alemay is a lovely Eurasian Singaporean in her twenties. She is single, teaches drama, and enjoys water-skiing. Tachikoma 7 only writes music when hes depressed, so its a good thing hes depressed a lot. He names himself after a class of childlike robots in a Japanese anime series. They long for the day when they are grown up enough to be released from their guardians, and that is the inspiration for Waiting For The Day. When asked to put a name to the genre of this tune, Tachikomas answer was, organic-electro. Amy Azizah, Singapores dancing queen of hip-hop, is an up-and-coming recording star in the Malay language. Here she sings in English, wondering where his head at. Earl Norman, traveling producer-composer-instrumentalist, is an American whose Singapore experience has inspired volumes of challenging music. Two of his haunting short pieces are featured here. Transformasi is an evolving polyglot band led by Shawn Letts, an Oklahoma native in his 18th year in Singapore. The band, a pop music project, is heavily influenced by Malay music, and Lookin For Another You, in particular, is built on the rhythm of the Malaysian theatre of shadow puppetry, a dying art. So, a pop-jazz song-of-lost-love on a funky Asian rhythm bed. On Honeymoon With Demons, Malay multi-disciplinary artist Mohamed Herman presents his own Malay lyrics and a Javanese childrens song in a futuristic context which makes them feel downright suspicious. His vocal effects are real, not electronic. The group shouts, horns and percussion were recorded on a portable DAT recorder in a hotel lobby in Cairo, Egypt during an Arab wedding party. This song scares some women and children and if youre going to dance to it, youll have to dance pretty fast. Lookin For Another You and Honeymoon With Demons are from the upcoming Transformasi album. Mohamed Noor Bin Syed Yakob is one of Singapores most accomplished and well-traveled musicians. A true multi-instrumentalist, he concentrates on drums and percussion. On Semangat Utan (Malay for Spirit of the Jungle), Mat Noor tunes the Kalimba, an African instrument, to an Indian scale and then takes a loosely Indian approach to improvising on it. His accompaniment is his own ravishing work on the Indian drums called Tablas and a wooden flute which he had never played before this one take. Mat Noor is currently creating an album with his band, Tribal Tide. Richard Philip is a Singaporean singer-songwriter of Indian heritage. He counts Bob Marley and Dave Matthews as major influences, but he doesnt sound like anyone but Richard Philip. Brothers Keeper is a response to a particular world problem, child abuse in Africa, but its basic message is broad and universal. Producer-Writer-Bassman Will Wright of New York has considerable tenure in Singapore. In Jungle Jazz and Just Chillin, Will creates moody, funky hip-hop-jazz and keeps it melodic

while still allowing his bass playing to influence the writing. Only a hint of a faraway feeling betrays his location. English DJ-producer Ben Galvin believes music, including his own, can change the world. In the case of his ongoing production project, FXion (pronounced like affection), the world changes and we can dance to it. Singer Nazneen is a half-Malay, half Pakistani hottie. Amulet is inspired by the Malay music-and-movement form called Dikir Barat, in which a gender-specific group of hand-drummers and unison singers accompanies two lead singers (of the same gender, of course). Performances are ritualistic, but energy, humor, and improvisation within a framework are hallmarks. The unison singers perform rehearsed arm-and-hand movements which can be quite dazzling. RAJA LAUT is a male Dikir Barat group, DIRGAHAYU is a female one, and Mohd. Herman is a superb solo singer in this very Arab-influenced style. Adi Gajah Putih (King White Elephant) is the leader of the guy group and the lovely Shariffah Widad is the leader of the girls. The leaders call, their respective groups respond. There is more to Dikir Barat than that. Amulet is a fusion based on a conceptual snapshot of an art form, but the energy comes from the people and these people are the people. The song is the brag of one who possesses a lucky charm and is therefore immune to most black magic. Meditation is a piece of music meant for meditation. The piano plays the part of the Saron players in a gamelan orchestra, the synthesized bass drone plays the part of the Tampura in an Indian ensemble, and the meandering melody is played on a succession of lovely keyboard samples of lovely Asian instruments. Woozyworld is a boring friendly guy who is always on time and has really short hair.

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