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Pata Java

Pata Masters & Kua Etnika | PATA Music

By [Chris May](#)

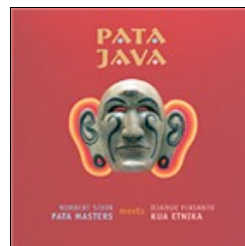
The latest world music project from Cologne-based saxophonist/bandleader Norbert Stein finds his jazz/new music Pata Masters quintet in Java, collaborating with Djaduk Ferianto and his eight-piece Kua Etnika gamelan. Previous Pata Masters albums have documented the band's explorations of Moroccan and Brazilian soundscapes.

The Indonesian gamelan has enchanted Western musicians since the late nineteenth century, and Austro-German composers have seemed particularly receptive to its charms (this is probably the result of random colonial-era exposure rather than some mysterious cultural synchronicity). Richard Strauss and Carl Orff are among Stein's distinguished predecessors. Stein himself was captivated during a tour of Indonesia in '01, and he returned in '03, spending two weeks composing and rehearsing with Ferianto and his musicians, before recording this album in Jakarta. About half the material is written by Stein and half by Ferianto.

On paper, the project sounds magical. The Pata Masters are adventurous and technically accomplished musicians on the cusp of jazz and European new music, and the gamelan is a sonic world unique to itself. It's composed of many singular string, wind, and percussion instruments, with the jewel in the crown probably being the bonang, a collection of tuned deep gongs, the instruments most commonly associated with the ensemble in the West. With a vast array of sounds at its behest, a gamelan can create delicate, ethereal soundscapes of great lyrical beauty or terrifying, apocalyptic visitations from the gods, and all points in between.

In practice, although the album is enjoyable, the collaboration, in macro terms, doesn't quite come off. Partly this is due to the imperfect recording of the gamelan--while the five Pata Masters are clearly separated and well to the front of the mix (at times overwhelmingly so) the larger, more complex gamelan is disappointingly amorphous and in the background. Partly also, I would suggest, it's due to the timescale involved in the project--a two-day collaboration might have produced some exciting full-on culture collisions, a two-year collaboration might have taken things into deep space, but two weeks is neither short enough nor long enough.

The Stein/Ferianto co-composition "Sound Theatre Of Tukang Pijad" gives a taste of what might have been, given more time: a wierd and trippy eight-minute sonic adventure over a suspended time signature, with Ferianto's abrasive New Opera-like vocals taking turns with equally startling instrumental responses. For much of the rest of the album the Pata Masters solo over chugging gamelan backgrounds without much interaction, making for a two dimensional experience rather than a three



Track Listing: Sing A Pure Song; Jiwa; Dialog; Speak Yomm; Juzzla Juzzli; Code Carnival; Cublak Cublak Suweng; Sound Theatre Of Tukang Pijad; Wulang Sunu.

Personnel: Norbert Stein, tenor saxophone; Michael Heupel, flutes, sub contra bass flute; Klaus Mages, drums; Matthias Von Welck, bass slit drums, deep mallets; Christoph Hillmann, electronics; Djaduk Ferianto, strompet sulawesi, vocal, kendangs, beduk, klunthung sapi, kemanak, ketipung sunda, krincing, triangle, shaker; Purwanto, bonang, klunthung sapi, calung, rebanas, rebab, kemanak, vocal; Suwarjiyo, kemung, klunthung sapi, rebanas, demung, vocal; Suharjono, saron, klunthung sapi, calung, rebanas, siter, vocal; Fredy Pardiman, saron, klunthung sapi, rebanas, rebab, vocal; Wardoyo, peking, krincing, kendang sunda, rebanas, klunthung sapi, vocal; Sukoco, gender, kendangs, calung dhendem, ketipung jawa, beduk; Sony Suprato, kempul, gong, beduk, rebana ketimpring, vocal.

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