

Tulips & Tangos

The Netherlands are known worldwide for its windmills and techno DJs but what makes its music world spin? Dutch popular music offers a delta full of crossovers, especially with styles originating from former colonies. Stan Rijven tiptoes through the past and present

TRANSLATION SCOTT ROLLINS

→ Like the proverbial vanes on a Dutch windmill, music has blown in from all directions, due to Netherlands' maritime past and its once open attitude towards migrants. The foundations were laid in the 17th century when the Dutch republic developed into a leading economic power, and created the first multinationals in history (United East India Company and the West India Company). They established colonies and trading posts around the world. In this global network, Amsterdam

pulled the strings and even caused the first stock market crash. During the 'Tulip mania' of 1637, the value of a single tulip bulb equalled that of a merchant's canal side house. Painting, printing and trade flourished during this golden age, thanks to the many migrants who took refuge for political or religious reasons.

It was not until the early 20th century that foreign musical influences actually began to take root. By the 1950s, foreign sounds had become commonplace. Thanks to Malando,

aka Arie Maasland, ballroom tango became widely popular. His compositions 'Olé Guapa' and 'Con Sentimiento' were international hits. Even though Anglo-American pop music later made tango seem old-fashioned, in the guise of tango *nuevo*, it has come back with a vengeance. Inspired by Astor Piazzolla, the 80s saw the formation of many ensembles such as Carel Kraayenhof & Sexteto Canyengue (see opposite). It's even possible to study tango at the Rotterdam conservatoire.



TYCHO MERLIN

Sounds from the City

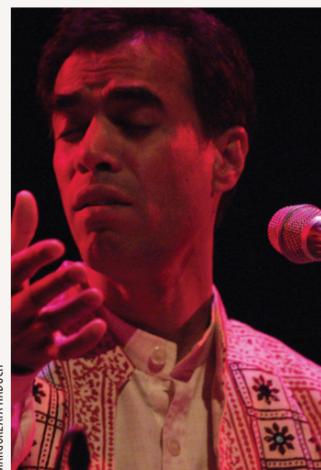
Between 1950 and 1980 political and economic changes led to a second massive influx of migrants. Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague – the cosmopolitan seats of government and royalty – transformed into vital centres for new musical hybrids.

After Indonesian independence (in 1949), tens of thousands emigrated

Above: Ethiopian singer Minyeshu
Below left to right: Gétatchèw + The Ex;
Raj Mohan; Izaline Calister



MARGORITA HADUCH



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to their former motherland. They introduced the sweet *kroncong* and the much rougher Indonesian-rock which laid the basis for the 60s *Nederbeat*. Consequently The Hague became the 'Liverpool of Holland' but also the beating heart of Indonesian culture. Today its annual Tong Tong Fair is the biggest Eurasian festival on the globe. Besides enjoying gamelan and Hawaiian music, there is fascinating new *kroncong* from Lo'ko & Van Ligten or traditional Moluccan-Indonesian island music going global by Boi Akih (see below).

Guest labourers from the Mediterranean and beyond came in great numbers in the mid-60s, during the post-war reconstruction period. Rotterdam turned into the musical capital of Cape Verde, home port for record labels that laid the groundwork for Cesaria Evora. In Amsterdam the musical heritage of Portugal, Morocco and Turkey now bear many different fruits (artists such as *fadista* Maria de Fátima, *rai* singer Kasba and Arifa, see more below).

The 70s saw political refugees

arriving from Argentina, Chile and South Africa; a decade later from Ethiopia (such as powerful singer Minyeshu) and Ghana. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, musicians from Eastern Europe revitalised the Dutch music scene.

Kaseko and Tumba

The Netherlands are also a breeding ground for innovative Latin and Indian crossovers. After Suriname's independence (in 1975) and the shutting down of Shell's oil refinery on Curaçao (in 1985), another large scale wave of migration from its former colonies took place. Surinamese and Dutch Antillean musicians enriched the Dutch salsa, jazz and soul scene and developed their own styles. Bands such as Fra Fra Sound explore the authentic connections between Surinamese *kaseko*, American jazz and African grooves while Combinatie XVI keep their Surinamese roots alive with incantatory *kawina* percussion and *winti* chanting. The *sárnami geet* repertoire of Hindi-Surinamese singer Raj Mohan recalls the historic link with

the India of his grandparents, when between 1873-1916 the Netherlands and England exchanged 35,000 contract labourers between their erstwhile colonies. Today 150,000 descendants live in Suriname, another 150,000 in the Netherlands.

The Dutch Antilles offer unexpected hybrids of Caribbean, European and African styles such as tumba, as exemplified by the musical talent Oswin Chin Behilia from Curaçao. This lyrical singer-songwriter with a political edge remains one of the Caribbean's best-kept secrets, along with fellow islander Izaline Calister who started a solo career in the Netherlands after singing with Dissidenten and Pili Pili. An accomplished performer and writer, she is ready to break out further afield. All these Dutch Caribbean crossovers come together in July at Rotterdam's Zomerfestival, the biggest Caribbean event in Europe.

New Delta Sounds

Over the past decade, new fusions have arisen from this broad musical

delta as pop, punk and jazz artists began collaborating with their new neighbours. NO blues fuse Arabic folk and American blues into *arabicana*; punkers The Ex collaborate with Ethiopian sax-legend Gétatchèw Mèkurya; Mdungu crosses its irresistible African grooves with Gambian percussion, while Turkish and Dutch improvisation lead to previously unheard-of experiments in the Baraná Trio. Amsterdam Klezmer Band (see below) and STriCat, who combines klezmer with jazz and Balkan continue to add fresh impetus to this new wave and a new genre – Dutch Delta Sounds. ●

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MORE See p29 for the Dutch Delta Sounds CD tracklisting



The Artists



Carel Kraayenhof & sexteto Canyengue

Former *uilleann* piper Kraayenhof is one of world's leading *bandoneón* virtuosos. He studied with Juan Mosalini and performed with Piazzolla before founding Sexteto Canyengue. Ennio Morricone, one of the many artists with whom Kraayenhof has recorded has said: "he makes the instrument work in a non-traditional way which in turn makes it surprisingly relevant." Kraayenhof still tours the club circuit, performing in such prestigious venues as Sydney's Opera House and Carnegie Hall.



Amsterdam Klezmer Band

Their latest album *Katla*, named after an Icelandic volcano, won the German Critics Award [reviewed in #75]. On stage the band erupt with the same energy. Both Shantel and Oi Va Voi are big fans. Check out these magnificent seven at the Sziget Festival in Budapest (August 11) or during their first UK tour: Musicport Festival, Bridlington on November 4; Na Zdrove, Sheffield on November 5 and Rich Mix, London on November 6.



Boi Akih

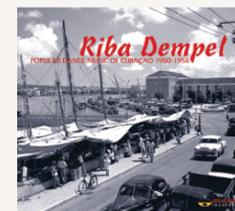
Singer Monica Akihary and guitarist Niels Brouwer are the nucleus of Boi Akih. They fuse the musical traditions from the Indonesian archipelago with European jazz and classical Indian music. Boi Akih perform in various line-ups, to date with top musicians such as *tabla* player Sandip Bhattacharya and cellist Ernst Reijseger, with huge success in Austria, China, India and Russia.



Arifa

Arifa is not only an Arabic term for female beauty and wisdom, but also an Amsterdam-based quartet with roots in Iraq, Romania and Turkey. Their debut *Beyond Babylon* was awarded best world album of 2010 in the Netherlands [reviewed in #74].

Abroad Arifa have received similar glowing reviews while performing in Belgium, Cuba, Germany and Mexico.



Dutch Antilles

Until recently little was known about the music of the Dutch Antilles outside of the islands themselves. Music historian Tim de Wolf has changed that, with his meticulous restoration of original 50s and 60s recordings on his seminal compilation *Riba Dempel*, which documents an overlooked chapter of Caribbean music history.