

TD's Top Ten for 2010

It's always a tough call, but my favorite album of the year is *Everybody Want Sum* by **Dumpstaphunk** (www.dumpstaphunk.com) Just can't get enough of that funky stuff! For a somewhat mellower, but equally uplifting performance, check out old favorites **Chris Hillman and Herb Peterson** in a beautifully recorded live acoustic performance *At Edwards Barn* (www.rounder.com). How sweet the sound! Now, for my official list of noteworthy yet somewhat obscure performances from 2010 that are unlikely to make it on anyone else's top ten lists...



Annalivia *Barrier Falls* (www.5-string.com) From New England, a virtuoso acoustic ensemble led by dynamic twin fiddles and lovely lead vocals from Liz Simmons. I guarantee you'll love their fresh interpretations of traditional tunes from North America, the UK and Ireland as well as some striking original compositions. If you like those fiddles, also give a listen to the second release by the young Alaska-based band **Bearfoot**, entitled *Follow Me* (www.compassrecords.com).

Eden Brent *Ain't Got No Troubles* (www.yellowdogrecords.com/eden) Whiskey-voiced, intensely soulful piano blues from New Orleans, backed by some of the cream of the local session cats. This is no nostalgia trip; she writes most of her own material and sounds like she's lived it, with a wry sense of humor.

The California Honeydrops *Spreadin' Honey* (www.cahoneydrops.com) A get-up-out-of-your-chair journey to the legendary crossroads where blues, hot jazz and early rock converged to birth R&B. A true DIY recording financed by passing the hat at an Oakland fundraiser. Talk about social capital!

Kings Go Forth *The Outsiders Are Back* (www.luakabop.com) Exciting, high energy big band classic soul music straight outta Milwaukee. The Dap Tone gang don't got nothin' on this multigenerational posse. What are you waiting for? Go on, get up offa that thang and dance! For a very satisfying West Coast variation, give a listen to LA's phenomenal **Orgōne's** latest, *Cali Fever* (www.ubiquityrecords.com www.orgonezone.com)

Los Cenzontles *Raza de Oro* (www.loscenzontles.com/razadeoro) It's been a treat to watch this young group of musicians from the East SF Bay Area grow up over the years. This is their finest album yet, featuring spinetingling harmonies, propulsive rhythms and beautiful interpretations of traditional Mexican tunes and modern covers from the likes of Los Lobos.

Razia *Zebu Nation* (www.raziasaid.com www.cumbancha.com) From Madagascar, breathtakingly beautiful and poignant music that draws attention to the plight of the local environment which has already been significantly affected by slash and burn agriculture and the ravages of climate change.

Smokin' Joe Kubek and Bnois King *Have Blues Will Travel* (www.alligator.com) If you like your blues Texas style... loud and with dueling guitars over gravelly vocals, this is for you. This one's guaranteed to bring a smile to your face, even on a cold, grey winter's day. To be played at maximum possible volume.

Luisa Maita *Lero-Lero* (www.cumbancha.com) A beautiful, sultry samba breeze from São Paulo, that combines capoeira rhythms with lyrics that poetically address the realities of favela life and the possibility of transcendence. Also highly recommended: Bay Area Brazilian sensations **Sambada's** new release *Gente!* (www.sambada.com) Party startin' pump up the volume dance music!

Tad Robinson *Back in Style* (www.severnrecords.com) Don't miss this one! I just happened on it while browsing the blues bins at Amoeba and am very glad I decided to give it a listen. He's paid his dues on the Chicago scene and has absorbed much from the Masters which he stirs into a delicious Memphis /Muscle Shoals roux. Smokin! And do yourself a favor and check out the other artists on this very strong independent label which bills itself as "roots music for the 21st century."

Daphne Willis *What to Say* (www.daphnewillis.com) Intelligent, swingin', spunky pop music from a talented young singer/songwriter. They label her "Folk" and she's on the venerable Vanguard label, and there are certainly folk aspects to some of her music, but she's got more in common with Jack Johnson and the Brushfire group than Joan Baez. Ignore the blah album art and give this one a listen....



Lagniappe

Deolinda *Dois Selos e um Carimbo* (www.deolinda.com.pt www.fourquartersent.com) Can't afford a winter getaway to sunny Portugal? Well, here's the next best thing. Tune into the captivating voice of Ana Bacalhau and her wonderfully skilled bandmates. You'll hear touches of *fado* poetry as well as delightful slices of life in a country that knows how to live.

Midlake *The Courage of Others* (www.midlake.net www.bellaunion.com) From out of Denton, TX of all places comes this contemporary homage to early Anglo folk rock a la Fairport Convention, Steeleye Span and Pentangle. Their minor key artistry is probably not for everyone, but I find myself coming back to it again and again. Definitely, refreshingly different.

Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu *Gurrumul* (www.skinnyfishmusic.com.au) I may have saved the best for last. This is deep soul music out of the Australian First Nations experience, channeled through an extraordinary vessel. You'd never know he was born blind from his acoustic guitar artistry and extraordinary imagery, but the voice is what transfixes you, along with heavenly double-tracked harmonies. Most of his music is quiet and meditative ... transcendent. The most obvious comparison for me is IZ ... need I say more?



After starting up a blog at www.tdtoptunes.blogspot.com I ran out of gas early this year... too much other stuff going on. I'm going to revisit it soon. Too much other good music I've come across from 2009 and things that didn't quite make this list that deserve to be shared. For prior Top Ten lists, see www.tdavid.net