

BUIKA – REVIEW

By: Robin Denselow

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Born in Spain to West African parents, Concha Buika started out on the flamenco scene but branched out to work with two great Cuban pianists, first Chucho Valdés and now Ivan "Melón" Lewis. Her new album, *La Noche Más Larga*, recorded with Lewis in her new home, Miami, has rightly been praised for its subtle, Cuban-flamenco mix, brave range of songs and slinky, rhythmic vocals.

On this UK tour, she is backed by Lewis, who demonstrated his gloriously inventive piano work from the start, and Spanish percussionist Ramón Porrina, who also played on the new album. Buika started well, showing off her wonderful husky voice. But then she suddenly stopped, apologised and took a lengthy drink before beginning the set again. There would be further stops, and swigs of what she said was rum, throughout a set in which she constantly giggled as she told lengthy, emotional or personal stories, about her father who disappeared for decades and forgot her name, or about her love life. Lewis embellished the chat with his gently insistent keyboards.

Buika's songs were equally unpredictable. There were patches of fine, smoky balladry, but these were mixed in with bursts of vocal and emotional overkill (she seemed to be crying at one point) and furious, harsh-edged improvisation and scat that veered between passionate and messy. She mysteriously ignored the inventive reworkings of Brel and Billie Holiday that appear on the new album, and her treatment of Santa Lucia started as a rousing flamenco workout and ended up sounding not soulful but furiously overexcited.

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2013/oct/16/buika-world-music-review>