



**FANFARE CIOCARLIA
LIVE + GYPSY BRASS LEGENDS DVD (Asfalt Tango ATR CD 2309)**

Here's a greatest hits live set from Fanfare Ciocărlia, with all the attendant high-energy pumping horns in stereo surround. The package also contains two full-length films about the group; one of them is concert footage of the live album, recorded in Berlin in 2004; the other a German documentary IAG BARI (Brass on Fire) about getting together to record their third album. The playing is tight and precise at first then gradually loosens into a more elastic notion of perfection as the energetic ceramic drums drive the tempo and the horns strive for approximate unity on the choruses. Madonna (the American pop star) is a useless human being with zero talent as a singer, but finally made a point by being booed in Romania for saying they (her fans) should tolerate gypsies (rather than just ogle her aging body in fishnets?). I read in the news recently about five gypsies being murdered in Romania in ethnic strife, so they have a long road ahead to social acceptance, and the films show you the conditions they live in. Pretty grim. For now music is their only escape. Their formula is neat: A solo instrument, trumpet or clarinet states the melody; one of them yells "Tzingari (Gypsies)!" and all of them jump in at full tilt. It's really exhilarating. Despite an ill-conceived and truly atrocious version of "Summertime" by Gershwin, they coast and toast their numerous hits and some gypsy standards, like "Lume Lume (Earth)," "Hurichestra," and "Iag Bari." The bad taste of the silly falsetto "Summertime" is rapidly swept away by the tune "Asfalt Tango," which indeed gave the record label its name, and is a scorcher.