

Aaron Kenyon on bass, substituting for Henry Osborne, while the dual guitars of Gayle Ellett and Mike Henderson grind, scream and soar, with Chuck Oken tying it all together at the kit. It's particularly interesting to notice the development and refinement of the older tracks, like "Burning The Hard City." Since the band's material is developed through improvisation, it only makes sense that their material will evolve with the passage of time, keeping each new performance vital. The spirited versions of "The Hanging Tree" and "No Man's Land" are worthy of note, with their over-the-top guitar exchanges. One will probably want to check out the studio releases of *New Dark Age* and *Ascension* first, but in a live situation, Djam Karet is a force to be reckoned with, and this latest disc offers no evidence to the contrary. — Peter Thelen

[http://www.djamkaret.com]

Djam Karet Solo Projects – "Winds of War"

(MP3.COM 173211, 2002, CD)

Let's first be clear about this one. It is NOT a Djam Karet album and there are no instruments played on the CD. *Winds of War* is a project by Djam Karet guitarist/keyboardist Gayle Ellett that features field recordings of Islamic life. He then processed this through a synthesizer to add an eerie dimension to the foreign-sounding recordings. The result is Ellett's attempt to create a musical interpretation of our current cultural battle against the "evil ones" (I presume that Elliott is quoting George the second). He has recorded the sounds of everyday life in Muslim cities of North Africa, which of course to the American ear sounds very exotic and confusing. Issued in a limited edition of 100 with a "slick, multimedia interface" for computers, this unique project probably appeals to a very limited audience. — David Ashcraft

Jewlia Eisenberg – "Trilectic"

(Tzadik TZ7155, 2001, CD)

It's probably stating the obvious to say that fans of Charming Hostess and (to some degree) Sleepytime Gorilla Museum are likely to enjoy this release as well. Eisenberg is one of the vocalists from Hostess, and all the current members of SGM appear here. The music has none of the heavy tendencies of SGM, however, and is nearly all unaccompanied voices. Eisenberg uses quite a variety of vocal styles, including tight Eastern European harmonies, bluesy melodies, and vocal percussive noises, so comparisons could be made to Les Voix Bulgares, Zap Mama, Sweet Honey in the Rock, and maybe even Ani DeFranco. Most of the songs follow the lives of Asja Lacis and Walter Benjamin, two radical Jews who lived in Moscow and other European cities back in the 1920s, when many intellectuals saw the new Soviet Union as an expression of philosophical ideals. Eisenberg has highlighted some of their more personal moments in addition to the political ones; one of my favorite tracks is "Eskimo Suit," in which Asja wants an expensive fur suit, but Walter can't afford it. The sometimes serious subject matter is treated with a light touch, never becoming overly sad or dramatic — after all, it's hard not to smile when singers are reproducing rhythm parts. Some of the lyrics are in English, many are not. After many listens, I've yet to hear a single false note, and I discover new details all the time (and that's always a good sign). — Jon Davis

[www.charminghostess.com]

Jean-Pierre Saccomani – "Music for Time"

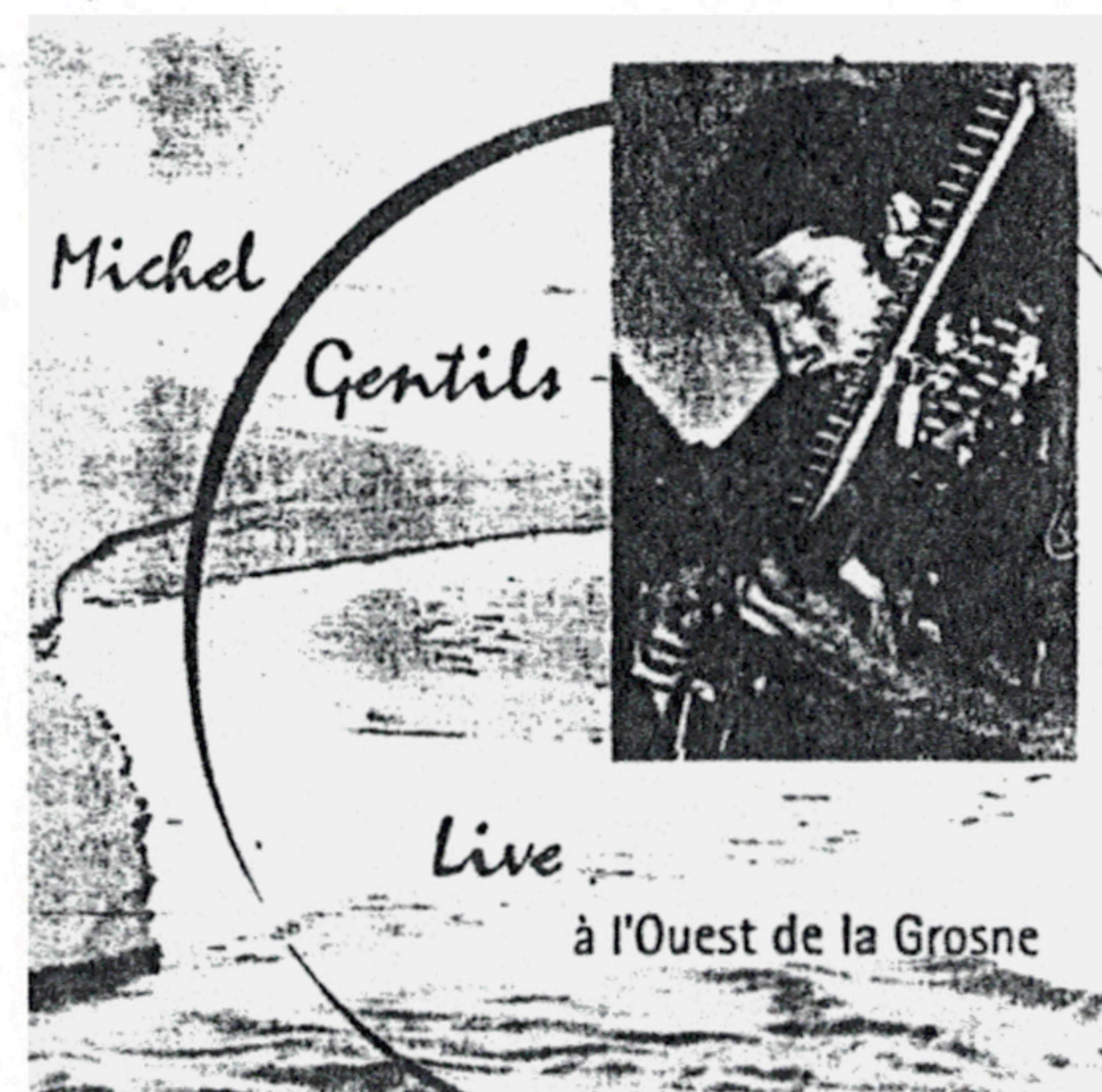
(MCP Productions, 2002, CD)

Returning from 1999's *The Four Seasons*, J-P Saccomani presents us with a slightly abstracter sextet of songs, a soundtrack for mind-paintings that seems a terranized companion to his buddy's J-L Berthelot's (Tales) space compositions. But, where Berthelot crafts holographic photographs of the outer gulfs, Saccomani stretches a canvas and brushes on discreetly nuanced pastorals that leak into the heavens. His intent seems to have been neoclassical, and, in tone, each song captures the emotions of wistful countrysides, empty ruins, deserted cities, lurking animism, and colors and shades beyond the norms of perception. One is constantly reminded of the duality of wild open spaces, which inspire in their beauty and chafe in their loneliness. Sometimes, as in the title track, his cross-transplantations of space with the heathery moors produce sinister reminders that nature's not the motherly nurturer we too often prefer to contemplate it as. There are, however, weaknesses in this collection. The choice of an unutterably mundane liner painting by Alfred Sisley was a major mistake, reeking of cheap Christmas cards and grandmothers sitting at looms, sipping herbal teas. It also gives premonitory indications of some inferior choices in the music: clashing patches, thin reverbing, layers of compositional elements that don't sit atop one another entirely comfortably, etc. Then, his dedication to "Girls with big tits" is... um... uh... In whole, *Music for Time* doesn't rise to the levels displayed in the stronger but similarly weak-pointed *Four Seasons*; hence, I'd suggest starting there and proceeding here. — Marc S. Tucker

Deus Ex Machina – "Cinque"

(Cuneiform Rune 159, 2002, CD)

Cinque is Deus Ex Machina's fifth studio album, and their first release since 1998's *Equilibrismo De Insofferenza*. What more can you say about this band that hasn't already been said? They are capable of playing so many different ways in so many different styles. They can be over-the-top powerful, understated and subtle, orchestrated and epic... *Cinque* sounds like much more of a finesse effort overall than a brawl, but songs like "Rhinoceros" show that Deus Ex Machina can rock with the best. That song definitely ranks up there as one of their classics. The brass section from the previous album has been replaced by a string quartet, though they only appear briefly. Guitarist Maurino Collina, keyboardist Fabrizio Puglisi, and vocalist extraordinaire Alberto Piras are the featured musicians, but the rest of the group shines as well. There are no weak links in this band. "Olim Sol Rogavit Terram I" is a guitar/vocal piece that has a series of overdubbed acoustic guitar parts over a basic chord pattern. "Luce" is a guitar/bass/violin instrumental that contains some interesting simultaneous solos from violin and slide guitar! Puglisi coaxes lots of strange sound effect tones from the Moog throughout. The album closes with several minutes of short snippets of parts recorded on cassettes at rehearsals and arranged together in one long collage piece. After 12 years on the scene, Deus Ex Machina still has a unique sound that continues to develop and grow. *De Republica* is still their best overall effort, but *Cinque* is absolutely worth having. — Mike Grimes



Michel Gentils – "Live à L'Ouest de la Grosne"

(Ethnez/Musea ET 8811.AR, 2001, CD)

Michel Gentils is one of those ace acoustic guitarists who has been lurking along the French countryside making amends with the twelve-string monsters that both torture and inspire his soul. He is probably best known for his work with Shyamal Maitre (percussionist for Didier Malherbe's *Hadouk* project). These sixteen pieces capture the fret-slinger in live mode with four of his favorite hardwood axes. An obvious influence on Gentils is the work of American icon Leo Kottke, who the first piece is named after. "L'Ecollier" and "Trois Thèmes" remind me of Pat Metheny's brief melodic encounter with the instrument during his memorable *New Chatauquau* period in the early 1980s. But there is also the fire of John McLaughlin and in particular Richard Leo Johnson as heard on "Flamenco Indien," a clever hybrid of both styles. Even romantic pastoral themes explored by Anthony Phillips in his *Private Parts and Pieces* series are revisited as on "Étoiles." Famed French producer Jacky Barbier mentored the project favoring one-takes rather than any studio re-work. The monster piece (over nine minutes) is the album's closer, "Deux Manches à Parthenay," which begins with a sitar guitar and accompanying drone. The thematic development is one where a slow build inclines into to a dramatic climax (and certain encore requests). In closing, Gentils is certainly of the multi-stylistic level of Michael Hedges and many Windham Hill acolytes, but he purposefully distances himself with his use of custom instruments. — Jeff Melton

Tunnels – "Progressivity"

(Buckyball Records BR009, 2001, CD)

Fusion fans will rejoice at the release of the third Tunnels album as it features former Brand X bassist Percy Jones reunited (on three of the ten tracks) with his former partner in crime, John Goodsall. Luckily the three tracks comprise over 30 minutes of playing time, and Goodsall is in fine form with his trademark blistering lines. And what can one say about Percy Jones? How many musicians (let alone bassists) have a unique, immediately identifiable sound? Percy's fluid, harmonic-filled fretless approach underlies the album without stealing the show from his band mates. The distinctive sound of Tunnels is also due in large part to wide sonic palette of leader/primary composer Marc Wagnon. The midi rig makes his vibes sound like various keyboards or numerous other instruments during his heads and solos. The band