

SONGLINES

THE WORLD MUSIC MAGAZINE

SONGLINES
PO BOX 54209
London W14 0WU
UK

No. 27, November / December 2004



Simon Broughton

Culture Musical Club Waridi

EMI/Jahazi Media 724359449821

Full Price (62 mins)

★★★★

The taarabastic CMC in all their mind-boggling glory

The once abundant pool of *taarab* orchestras on the spice island of Zanzibar has shrunk catastrophically in recent decades. Notwithstanding the superlative efforts of the new Dhow Countries Music Academy, full-monty orchestras replete with violin section, *ouds*, accordions, *nay*, *qanun*, chorus and more are as rare as leopards on this extravagantly lush slither of land off the east coast of Africa. This is why we should all be thankful for the fact that one of the oldest and most venerable groups, Culture Musical Club, continues to thrive, keeping the big-orchestra *taarab* flame alive in their ramshackle clubhouse in the Vuga area of Stone Town.

The languorous swell of CMC in full sail is one of the greatest musical treats in the whole of Africa, and it is expertly captured on this new CD. Some of the old patriarchs of the group have now passed away or taken a back seat, but veterans of the politically charged days in the late 50s when the Club first began, like chief composer Said Mwinyi and *udi* and violin maestro Said Nassor, are still active. Their experience and wisdom is complemented by new blood in the form of *qanun* player Rajab Suleiman and first violinist Kesi Juma. This mix of old and young, and the valuable continuity that an old yet thriving *taarab* club affords, gives the music its unique depth, energy, groove and elasticity.

A special shout should go out to German musicologist and Zanzibarophile Werner Graebner, whose unstinting efforts have kept Culture Musical Club in the international spotlight and sailing from strength to strength like a brightly coloured *dhow* riding a scented north-easterly down from the Gulf.

Andy Morgan

SONGLINES
TOP OF THE WORLD

