

Global Reviewed by Martin Longley

Watcha Clan

Diaspora Hi-Fi

PIRANHA CD/LP

The cover line of "A Mediterranean Caravan" is something of an understatement, with this Marseille crew's figurehead Sista K delivering five songs in Arabic, two in Hebrew, one apiece in Yiddish, French and English, and one as a hybrid of the latter pair. Her own background is nearly as varied, comprising ratios of Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jewishness, with a splash of Berber. The booming, clattering foundation is also a melange, binding together hip-hop, reggae, ragga and drum 'n' bass, but with a pronounced North African vocabulary. To some listeners, this might sound like too much of everything, but the strength of Watcha Clan is their overall stylistic harness, coupled with the lusty theatrical power of Sista K. After a scene-setting introduction, "Goumari" makes a forceful statement, beginning a high stamina run of sustained exuberance. As the disc progresses, the reggae element deepens, but it's the earlier tracks that best illustrate Watcha Clan's abilities, their global fusion being of the dangerously serrated variety. □