

trumpet and trombone, while Italian Marco Dalmasso, aka Ghiaccioli e Branzini, adds electro-percussion, synthesizers and programming. At their best they match the vitality of a great Balkan band in a fusion style that mixes European and North African influences with solid, stomping percussion, helped by sturdy brass work. 'Damne' provides an exuberant opening to the set, and other rousing tracks include the cheerfully upbeat 'Sus' and 'Mariage'. Slower songs such as 'As I Am' are not always as distinctive, though 'Rahil' is a thoughtful, North African-influenced piece about the problems of immigrants, featuring some fine trombone work. It's an intriguing if sometimes patchy set, and I suspect that Fanfara Station will sound even better experienced live.

ROBIN DENSELOW

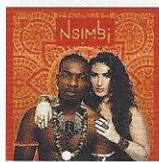
TRACK TO TRY *Damne*

Nsimbi
Nsimbi

Imara Records (52 mins)

★★★★★

Hip-hop and Swahili proverbs



This is a collection of songs based on Swahili proverbs and performed by Ugandan-American duo

Nsimbi. GNL Zamba is a Ugandan storyteller and hip-hop MC, and his partner Miriam Tamar is an established American singer-songwriter. Zamba achieved fame in Uganda as a 'ghetto storyteller,' with his rap influenced by American and African rap pioneers. There is an attractive contrast to their voices, as Zamba sing-talks his lyrics and stories in Luganda, Lingala and Swahili languages while Miriam Tamar's very silky pop voice weaves around the songs sung primarily in English.

The instrumentation is performed, arranged and produced by just two musicians: Congolese-born guitarist and singer Jaja Bashengezi and Ugandan Herbert Kinobe. Between them they play an array of traditional instruments, bowed, plucked and struck. *Kora*, *ngoni*, *adungu* (lyre), *balafon*, *likembé* and various percussion instruments are interspersed with acoustic and fluid electric guitar. This very gentle but rhythmically diverse album reaps a multitude of rewards – it is both musically and lyrically uplifting.

MARTIN SINNOCK

TRACK TO TRY *Leo Ni Leo*



TOP OF THE WORLD
TRACK 7



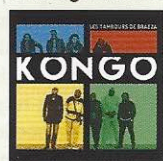
N'Kurumah Lauson Daku

Les Tambours de Brazza
Kongo

Buda Musique (39 mins)

★★★★★

Rolling, riverine rumba: quintessentially Congolese



Since 1991 this group from Brazzaville in the Republic of Congo has been developing its folkloric drum and dance act into a modern fusion that also incorporates singing and electric instrumentation. This is a fine blend of Central African drumming mixed with a lively version of the *soukous* sound. Leader Emile Biayenda composed most of the songs, and the subject matter reflects the roots and traditions of a developing Congo: nostalgia, deforestation and, on 'Naléla Na Tina', a tribute to the father-figures of music from Congo-Brazzaville.

Principal vocalist Soly Matsimba has a fine voice and the group's choral and percussive responses are lively and fun. On one track he is joined by an impressive female guest vocalist, Monie Kongo. They have an articulate guitarist, Amen Viana, whose versatility shows as he switches between delicate acoustic playing and fluid Santana-esque rock. Incessant *ngoma* (hand drumming) throughout this disc mirrors the ever-present tumbling waters of the Congo River – the inspiration for this powerful and dynamic group.

MARTIN SINNOCK

TRACK TO TRY *Caméléon*