

## **World**

### **Gangbe Brass Band**

Whendo

Contre-Jour/Harmonia Mundi

While the British mind locates brass band culture firmly in the North of England, the past few years have made us aware of other equally potent traditions – from the Balkans, India and now West Africa. Along the old "slave coast" of Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria, the municipal and military bands of European outposts interacted with local ritual music – a little-known legacy that has been revived and revitalised by Benin's explosive Gangbe Brass Band.

While percussion serves a simple time-keeping function in Western brass music, this band's drummers and bell-tappers set up an endlessly shifting polyrhythmic base, over which the earthy voices and growling, spitting horns hold call-and response dialogues reminiscent at times of Fela Kuti's afro-beat.

There are touches of calypso and rumba in the towering fanfares, of Ghanaian highlife in the rolling dance rhythms, though there is less than you might expect of the blaring, slightly flat sound of classic African dance-band brass. But that sound was caused largely by worn-out reeds, and these guys clearly keep their instruments in extremely good nick.

**Mark Hudson, The Daily Telegraph, 29 January 2005**