

People

PICKS & PANS/MUSIC

Roots Gipsy Kings

By Ralph Novak

CRITIC'S CHOICE
FLAMENCO

The Gipsy Kings are still the best thing to come out of Arles, France, since Vincent Van Gogh. As if watched over by the spirits of the great European guitarists--Django Reinhardt, Carlos Montoya and Manitas de Plata--this group of eight cousins (including de Plata's second cousins, the five Reyes brothers) continues to create memorable music that evokes the intricate passions of the Spanish flamenco style. On this collection, which finds the Kings returning to their acoustic Roots, Nicolas and Canut Reyes alternate lead vocals, while Tonino Baliardo deftly handles most of the lead guitar duties.

There is one explicit nod to Reinhardt--his achingly beautiful tune «Nuages,» on which Baliardo suggests some of the delicate artistry that made Reinhardt a jazz legend. Although the lyrics are sung in Spanish, you don't need to understand the words to appreciate this disc. Way beyond the strictures of language, these 16 songs will resonate with anyone who loves heartfelt, meticulously performed music.

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