

SONGLINES

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New York-based
Czech singer
Marta Topferova

Marta Topferova **The Other Shore**

World Village

★★★

A shore thing



Few artists are as cosmopolitan as Marta Topferova. Born and partly raised in Czechoslovakia, this

30-something singer-songwriter emigrated to the US as a teenager and has travelled widely, all the while exploring Latin music, her overriding passion since an early age. Today her home is New York and Topferova brings her deep, smoky voice and songwriting talent to the city's Latin music scene. Topferova has recorded three albums of original compositions, all featuring a variety of Latin influences and sung in Spanish. So with its supporting band of jazz musicians and entirely English vocals, *The Other Shore*, is a new departure for her. Still rich and sultry, Topferova's voice is nevertheless lighter here than on previous records, fitting with the new album's café jazz sound and poetic lyrics, which often focus on the natural

world. With the exception of a few tasteful solos, the accompanying palette of guitar, rhythm section, horns, flute and cello all play languidly in the background. The result is a stylish, melodic set that is just the right side of understated.

Quite where *The Other Shore* will fit into Topferova's wider body of work, or into her live performances, isn't clear. From the *bossa nova* lilt of opening track, 'End of Winter', to the lilting 'Night Sky', on which Topferova plays riffs on the *cuatro* (a small Venezuelan guitar), there are subtle Latin twists. By contrast, the straightahead ballads tend to float rather than flow. As an artist in her prime, Marta Topferova is right to experiment, but *The Other Shore* is unlikely to be her final destination.

Tim Woodall