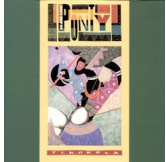**Jean-Luc Ponty - Tchokola (1991)**

1 Mam' Mai 5:57   2 Sakka Sakka 5:20   3 Tchokola 5:45   4 Mouna Bowa 6:30   5 N'Fan Môt 6:07   6 Yé Ké Yé Ké 4:55   7 Bamako 4:30   8 Rhum 'N' Zouc 5:02   9 Cono 4:55   10 Bottle Bop 4:48   Personnel   Jean-Luc Ponty – violin, keyboards, electric violin and viola   Martin Atangana – guitar   Yves N'Djock – guitar   Guy N'Sangue – bass   Brice Wassy – drums, percussion   Moustapha Cisse – percussion   Angélique Kidjo – vocals   Myriam Betty – vocals   Esther Dobong'Na Essiène (aka Estha Divine)-vocals   Kémo Kouyaté – harp, background vocals, Balafon, Kora   Abdou M'Boup – percussion, bongos, vocals, Sabar, Tama, Bugarabu   Willy N'For – vocals

Every eight years, it seems, Jean-Luc Ponty picks himself up, gives himself a good shake, and switches direction. In 1967, he made his first life-changing visit to the U.S.; 1975 found him going solo permanently as a jazz/rock icon; 1983 marked a switch to sequencer music; and in 1991, Ponty discovered African music. Taking advantage of the huge interest in African music in France, Ponty recorded his electric violin over the churning, hypnotic grooves of a coterie of visiting West African musicians in Paris, and the results, on Tchokola, are delicious. In one sense, not that much has changed, for while Ponty has thrown out the sequencers and electronic gizmos, his music remains grounded in repeated ostinato patterns -- those provided by the Africans. Ponty dabbles in all kinds of grooves -- the Nigerian juju, Cameroon's makossa (there is an especially swinging example of that on "Mouna Bowa"), the Afro-French Caribbean zouk, the sabar from Senegal, West Africa's mandingo, and a few others. On top of these, Ponty imposes his own distinctive melodic ideas on acoustic or electric violin, gingerly negotiating his way over the bumps of the tricky rhythms. At times, one feels that even this endlessly pliable virtuoso is not quite comfortable with these exotic idioms, but the music is so infectious that it usually sweeps him -- and us -- right along. --- Richard S. Ginell, Rovi

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