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## Think Outside the Squeezebox

Sunday, July 18 2010 @ 02:22 AM EDT

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Rana Santacruz

[Chicavasco](#) (Oasis, 2010)

The first couple of tracks make Rana Santacruz's debut CD sound like it's going to turn out to be a fairly straightforward exercise in Mexican folk music. Waltz-like rhythms sway along beneath Santacruz's breathy vocals and passionately precise accordion playing. Listen further, though, and you'll find the banjo accompaniment on "Mariquita" has a distinct bluegrass feel, a bit of French chanson melancholy hangs over "Dejala Entrar," "No Puedo Mas" breaks into an unexpected hoedown, etc. Seems as though Santacruz is looking to cross a few borders here, and he does so more and more convincingly as the disc progresses



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Most of the songs, like the truly stunning "Cajita De Barro," start simply and build to unexpected heights, adding instruments, voices and production touches before hitting a climax or returning to the basics from whence they sprang. Either way, Chicavasco is an ongoing pleasure. This is one of those albums where you could ask a dozen global music listeners what it sounds like to them and get as many different responses. Me, I'm hearing strains of Mexican mariachi and son jarocho, Argentinean chamame, Celtic airs, Iberian roots and a lot more.

At least one track, the brief and dizzying "El Ranchero Punk," makes its influences clear via the title, but Chicavasco works best when subtlety and seamlessness go hand in hand, which is often. Best of all is the 8-minute "Loopita," an aural collage of the highest sort.

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