



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Why The Mountains Are Black: Primeval Greek Village Music 1907-1960

THIRD MAN

8/10

The essential sounds of an ancient culture, courtesy of Jack White

“No ancient Western culture valued music more highly than the ancient Greeks,” writes Christopher King in the sleevenotes to this 2CD set of revelations, taking a longer view of cultural history than most CD compilers. The music harvested by King from precious 78s provides a connection between this formative civilisation and 20th-century America, as the Greek diaspora bring their traditions to the States. The duelling bagpipe music played here by Zembillas And Mailles on two tracks, for instance, originates on two small islands in the Aegean. By the time of the recordings in 1950, however, this *tsabouna* music had migrated to Tarpon Springs, Florida, where many of its practitioners had relocated to ply their trades as free-diving sponge fishermen. King, also a noted collector of old blues records, makes big claims for the social necessity of this music: “It was an essential tool for survival,” he claims, “as natural and as necessary as any object crafted for hunting.” Critically, it’s also wildly entertaining in a way that transcends historical context: check “Enas Aetos-Tsamiko”, a nimble and uproarious jam, recorded in 1926, that King identifies as kin to the hot jazz of the time.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN MULVEY