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SOUND ON SOUND

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Troy Banarzi

Euphonika

Euphonika might well have been CD of the Month, but for the fact that Troy Banarzi already has an Arts Council grant to fund its production. There's a lot of inverse snobbery and Philistinism around subsidised art, and a tendency to dismiss projects like *Euphonika* as pretentious or difficult. All I can say is that if you do so, you're missing a treat.

The CD originated as the soundtrack to a "quasi-theatrical sound and vision performance", yet, unlike much 'soundtrack' music, it feels perfectly complete even without the visual or dramatic elements. There's a folk influence and a fairy-tale quality to Banarzi's style of composition; often dark, yet always accessible, it expertly balances a string quartet against other instruments more associated with pop, such as the Hammond organ. Several of the pieces are overlaid with lengthy speech samples, and on the second track, 'Mother

Machine', the results are truly spine-chilling, even if some of the others stray slightly too far into schlock-horror territory to be as effective.

It's also beautifully recorded. 'Toy' instruments such as the melodica often come over as irritating novelties, but in this case they convey exactly the right blend of gaucheness and menace. I always like to hear string players who can bring out the potential of their instruments for brutality as well as sweetness and light, and the in-your-face sound suits the music perfectly. In a word: stunning. *Sam Inglis*

W www.banarzi.com