

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Beirut Adrift

NORIENT

Despite the title's suggestion, we're not so much cut adrift as steered through this atmospheric compilation by the guiding hand of esteemed Lebanese writer and educator, Rayya Badran. Her selection of nine favourite tracks from Beirut acts – a moving soundtrack to a city beleaguered by political and economic crisis – is by turns both sorrowful and defiant.

'Jumana' is an exquisite opener, a sonically rich dance between accordion, metallophone and electronics from young experimental musician Yara Asmar. There's a dark turn ahead with Anthony Sahyoun's eerily sparse 'Khifat Al-Atraf', which features solemn spoken-word from Firas al-Hallak "who recounts visions of horror the city of Beirut has witnessed". Sary Moussa, meanwhile, evokes the ocean swell with his brief, rolling soundscape 'Tides', leading nicely into the cathartic drone of Fadi Tabbal's closing track 'Ceremony By The Sea'.

It's a compilation packed with highlights, but Jad Atoui & Khodor Ellaik's sprawling modular/sax epic 'Blackout' stands out, an unassuming yet poignant reflection on Beirut's ongoing power outages. An essential and inspiring collection. **CF**