

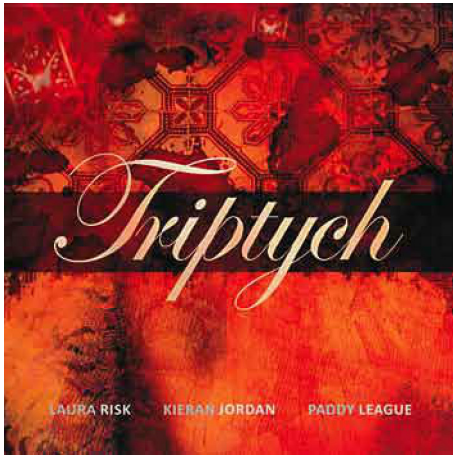
refreshingly new treatment of the classic *Come By The Hills* which is at once familiar yet very different. Adam's effortless delivery and the sympathetic accompaniment make this version a treat.

The inclusion of two Sean Og Graham tunes is perhaps a giveaway to one of their influences, as the many twists and turns in their sets are "Beoga-esque" in treatment. It certainly makes for entertaining listening – expect the unexpected! Well worth a listen.

Jim Byrne

TRIPTYCH

Triptych
Private Label TTCD1101



A trio, of course: Montreal fiddler Laura Risk, Boston Irish singer Paddy League, and a lady stepdancer who goes by the name Kieran Jordan. Triptych take a pleasingly understated approach to mainly Irish and Scottish music. Theirs is a quite contemporary acoustic style, sparse melodies set against criss-crossing rhythms, but the delicate touch and precise intonation are timeless. Laura's fiddle fronts nine tracks, with Paddy only rarely plucking the melody, although he sings three songs and adds drums to his rhythmic guitar. Kieran's feet grace all but two tracks: using a variety of shoes and surfaces, her contribution ranges from subtle *sean nós* shuffles to full-on tap steps. Combining music and step dance is a strong Canadian thread which is spreading fast, and this recording can only help: Kieran's feet are wonderfully expressive as she weaves around guitar and fiddle. The visual side of her performance is obviously absent on a CD, but the website www.triptychtrad.com gives some idea of Kieran's presence on stage.

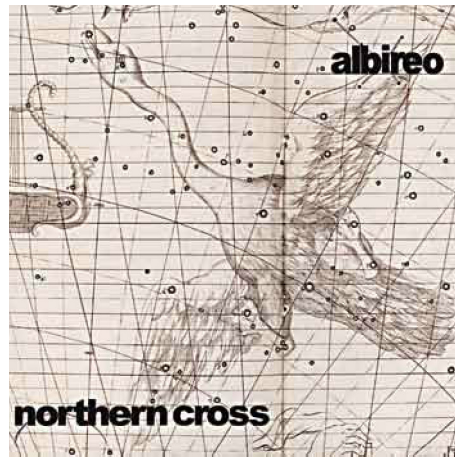
So what's on these twelve tracks? Four old Scottish reels which show Laura's affinity with the playing of Alasdair Fraser, a powerful up-tempo Irish Gaelic song of unrequited love, two luscious Irish hornpipes, a quirky League slow jig and an earthy Galician march, William Jackson's air *The House On The Hill* which seems bland by comparison, and another pair of jigs with Paddy's catchy composition *Lady Washington* ending the first half of this debut CD. Side two (remember those?) starts with another striking Irish vocal, a poem set to music by Mr League, moving into a high-energy set of Canadian reels, before two more

tasty Paddy tunes and some bewildering rhythms bring us to the final three jigs. There are a couple of weak points - a Ewan McColl song which doesn't quite measure up to the Gaelic numbers, and a version of *Caillin an Tí Mór* which steps alarmingly out of its Celtic mode - but the rest of this recording is excellent. Stripping away the layers of larger groups to reveal the music underneath, Triptych show that less can be more than enough.

Alex Monaghan

ALBIREO

Northern Cross
Flying Swan Records CYG001



Albireo are an experienced Manchester / Cheshire ceilidh band, and it has taken them a few years to get round to releasing this, their first CD. My initial reaction is "what took you so long?"

The band comprise Tom Kitching, fiddle, mandolin; Howard Jones, melodeon, Anglo concertina, hammered dulcimer, recorder; Steve Hodgskiss, piano, English concertina; Peter Crowther, bass, keyboard; and Sean Bechhofer, guitar. They produce an overall sound which very clearly retains its English roots, but at the same time is fresh, gutsy and attention-grabbing.

This is achieved to a large extent by a powerful, though never overwhelming, back line which concentrates on the rhythmic side, allowing the squeezeboxes and fiddle to explore the melodic side. In amongst all the top-class playing all round, there are some particularly fine bits of bass, an instrument which is often relegated to the minor leagues, but here is up-front and adds an extra depth and interest to the overall ensemble.

The tunes are mostly English traditional, but there is a scattering of original numbers, and a few from further shores, all of which are given the Albireo treatment and come out fresh and vibrant. The American set of *Arkansas Traveller* / *Bill Cheatham's Reel* / *The Kitchen Girl* for example fairly zips along in such a way that you have to check and see which side of the Atlantic you're on, especially as it follows a Henry Purcell hornpipe from 1698 which is as stately as you would expect.

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