



Tradition In Review by Bill Margeson

Bill Margeson reviews CD releases by musicians performing traditional music, plus music news.

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The regular reader is aware that we have been huge fans of Chicago percussionist, Jackie Moran, for years. He has become ubiquitous in trad music through appearing on almost everyone's album as a studio musician. His sure, yet complex style on bodhran, congas, drums, and any other piece of rhythmic equipment that gets in his way has made him justly respected in the trad scene. Well, his group—Gan Bua, has a new, wonderful album out on its own label—naturally, Gan Bua! Jackie is joined by three terrific cohorts in Christy Bain on fiddle and viola, Tim Fleming on guitar and vocals and Sheila Doorley on button box. This band is a sure point of reference to the newest and best approaches to the tradition. Innovation and a real respect for the music are displayed on every cut. (By the way, the album cover is one of the best we've seen in years!!) There are four songs on the album, and Fleming does a lovely turn on each. A set of reels on cut three are the instrumental highlights. The tunes really show the wonderful musicianship of each of the group's members. The reels start with "The Exiles of Erin" and then blend perfectly into "A Punch in the Dark". Very percussive (Jackie on conga and bodhran and at his best). This is mighty stuff, indeed. This clearly sounds like "New Group of the Year" to us. All these players have, of course, been doing this for years. So, why do some get it so right, while others miss it so badly? We don't know. But, we do know everything on this album is right. There is wonderful production here, with Dennis Cahill lending a hand. You know him. The guitar player with the hottest duo in trad, he and fiddler Martin Hayes are one of the big international draws in the scene. But, Dennis is also rapidly becoming one of the very best producers in the business.

K. E-mail the group through its site at www.ganbua.com or go to another wonderful site, cdbaby.com and get a copy. This is powerful, simultaneously pure and innovative trad music at its most exciting. Chicago has a new major force on the scene—you heard about them first here. Well, there were those 250 people at the recent debut party at Martyr's. Get in on this ride early. This is brill!

Rating: Four Harps