



SingOut!

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Bua

An Spealadóir

Mad River 1016

Bua has been called Chicago's answer to New York City-based Solás [sic], but comparisons to Planxty might be more in order. In an age in which bands fuse Irish music with everything from jazz riffs and African rhythms to rock 'n' roll covers and post-punk thrash, Bua is unabashedly retro--more prone to lift material from 19th Century songbooks than engage in 21st Century mash-ups. A typical Bua treatment is "The Ballinamore" set. Its opening tune comes from an old Martin Mulvihill collection, the second from an 1816 Scottish melody booklet, and the final one from an early 1980s Dé Dannan record. It is a lively medley in which group playing is stressed over virtuoso playing, thereby assuring the sum is greater than the parts, another trait too often gone missing in contemporary recording. To the degree that this fine quintet has a leader, it is vocalist Brian Hart, whose light tenor voice is supple and soothing. But he can also crank out the craic, as he does on "A mhisg a chuir [sic] an Nollaig oirnn," a rousing set of Scottish mouth music songs. But it's the instrumentation that will set your feet a dancing. "The Blacksmith" set is a real scone-slinger, one driven by Séan [sic] Gavin's Uileann pipes, Jackie Moran's bodhrán, Brian Miller's guitar and Chris Bain's fiddle. The gentle title track tells the story of an Irish farmer rescued by his neighbors when he takes ill at harvest time. Its collaborative theme is a metaphor for Bua's playing.

--RWeir