

Band: Whalebone
Title: -3 fires-
cat: TWW278

CD review by



Dan James for brfm

The wonderful Whalebone just get better and better. Scintillating strings and brilliant dynamics make for an album that sits comfortably on your CD player until the very last track. I even thought I heard a vocal on the track *Corndon Morning* until I realized Sarah Ibberson's violin part was so sweet it sounded like singing. For the uninitiated Whalebone are a trio of 2 acoustic guitars and one fiddler playing original instrumentals in a unique & folksy style. As ever Steve Downs plays the most fantastic lead guitar parts which intertwine with Sarah's fiddle lines and Charlotte Watson's confident and considered rhythm textures. The brightness and detail of the strings is boosted by beautiful lower mid warmth from the guitars to give an almost orchestral feel at times.

The CD arrived wrapped in mauve tissue paper with a stylish whalebone sticker holding the package together (I don't know whether this is standard but it was great presentation) and is a colourful production. The handpainted cover design hints at Van Gogh showing bright yellow fields with a golden sun and green woods on the horizon. The whole comes in one of those LP style folding card covers that I love so much. Inside the cover is a warm red sky with blue hills in the same style and in case you might feel short on artwork there is a separate printed booklet with a huge collage of band photos and a painting of the Wenlock hare as featured on track 2.

This is the reason that buying individual tracks from the net doesn't compare with the album as an artwork. Though all the tracks work beautifully on their own, the whole package gives a great impression of the Shropshire countryside where the band are from. Hence tunes like the **Wenlock Hare** which sounds slightly drunken like it's protagonist and the soaring **Corndon Morning**. Being a border county there is also a tune inspired by welsh sheep farming (**The Gathering**) according to their stage patter. There are 14 tracks and they are all brilliant and engaging so I hesitate to name any favourites but **Wenlock Hare, The Gathering and Hooty Mullock** (for it's hints at rock harmony and rhythm) rank as some of the finest acoustic music you will hear on CD. The whole is held together by some really great writing and arrangements as well as some really superlative musicianship. Like the title track **Three Fires** this CD evokes midsummer and rural idyll. There are some rather brilliant covers too so rock fans will recognize **Sweet child of Mine** and **Stairway to Heaven** (well Steve has got long hair!). Folkies will recognize **Danny Boy**. The *Three fires* album is a breath of summers warmth that will go some way towards keeping out the winter cold, both visually and musically and I urge you to buy it before it sells out, which it undoubtedly will.