



aided by, among many others, Michael McGoldrick on flute and whistles. Alongside his own suitably dextrous playing allied to a resonant voice that 'does' reflective and gleeful equally well, Damien has fashioned an album that not only travels hopefully – it arrives in style!
www.purerecords.net
Clive Pownceby

Live from Dan's Hall: Music for English Country Dance

The Dancehall Players

Victoria English Country Dance Society,
 TDPCD10

Hailing from Victoria, British Columbia, the Dancehall Players take their name from Dan's Hall, a building attached to an old farmhouse, and long used for various forms of folk dance. In 2001, caller Rosemary Lach launched an eight-week English country dance (ECD) series, the success of which led to the establishment of weekly Thursday evening ECD workshops in Dan's Hall and to the formation of the Victoria English Country Dance Society.

From the very beginning, music was provided by live musicians and the initial pairing of Dan Page and Ann Schau gradually expanded to the present sextet, which nowadays plays for dances throughout the area in various combinations.

This CD, recorded in the autumn of 2009, not only showcases their obvious talents on flute, guitar, recorder, violin, cello, mandolin and keyboard, but also reflects the sense of musical cohesion and enjoyment that only comes from a settled band who play together week in and week out.

The CD is designed for dancing as well as for listening, and the fourteen tracks are arranged as two halves of an evening's dance. Dating largely from the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, many of the sixteen tunes will be familiar to dancers; however some unfamiliar melodies, plus five contemporary tunes written by band members, add a welcome variety. The Dancehall Players' version of 'Childgrove' illustrates perfectly their empathy with dances and dancers, and their arrangements of 'Agatha' (Erasmus Widmann, 1631) and 'Miss Gordon of Gight' (Isaac Cooper, 1790) are my personal

standout tracks on the CD.

The excellent sleeve notes give recommendations and sources for the tunes, as well as for dances that fit the tunes, and these will no doubt have callers and musicians scurrying towards their reference books. *Live from Dan's Hall* is a most enjoyable CD that captures the Dancehall Players at the top of their game and is doubtless destined to become a favourite of ECD enthusiasts worldwide.

www.vecds.bc.ca

Robbie Thomas

Look Where I've Ended Up Now

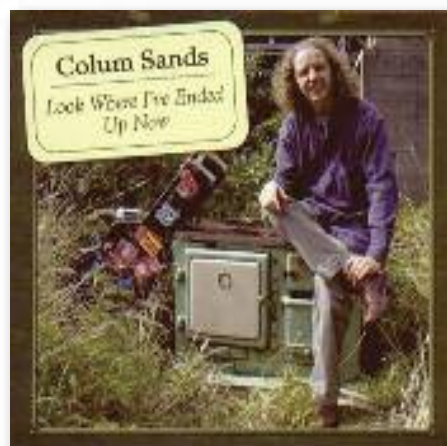
Colum Sands

Spring Records, SCD 1059

Colum Sands is a contemporary singer-songwriter-guitarist; I don't often enjoy music in this genre, but this is a most persuasive, well-written set of songs.

A seasoned performer, of the well-respected Sands family of Northern Ireland, Colum's singing voice addresses you personally from the start of this as-live CD: 'Good evening my friends...' as he gives his observations of life as a travelling singer on the roads of Ireland, England and the rest of Europe over many years. The style is sincere, immediate and conversational; the words are clever: 'Security's getting more dangerous'; 'Remote controllers all over the house/we have not the remotest control/on the ones we went and elected.' With wit, he demolishes his pet hate with 'Too Loud', and plays on meanings in German and English in 'Du You Sie', but his more sombre songs are the moving ones: 'Song for Nuri', where the simple repetitive verses tell of a tree with a name common to Arabic and Hebrew. The tree that gave shade, the school that brought wisdom, both are gone in the upheaval of war, both peoples suffer. 'Michael's Orchard' similarly draws on the tree as a symbol of life and renewal, celebrating the determination of a County Clare man who's told, 'You'll never grow an apple tree in this part of the country'. Sinead Stone's backing vocals add to the satisfying intensity of this song, a true story about her father. Indeed all the backing musicians contribute ably and subtly to this well-produced CD, especially Nuala Curran on cello and Ursula Byrne on fiddle.

Surprisingly, Fred Jordan turns up, in a song



about a pair of his boots handed on to a Shropshire singer, now living in New Zealand. Anyone looking for a good chorus song in his memory should check this one out (though I'm afraid I can hear Fred's derisive 'Pah!' at its whimsical nature). In contrast is the down to earth song dedicated to Doreen Henderson. From personal knowledge of her mining family, the Elliotts of Birtley, Colum writes movingly of young Doreen putting her ear to the ground to 'hear' her father Jack at work and of carrying on his spirit in her political commitment: 'Now she stands against the war and a voice she's raising rightly/Once our men died digging coal now it's oil and war unsightly'.

www.columsands.net

Peta Webb

Old Stories Nancy Wallace

Midwich Records, WYND001CD



If you've only seen London (via Suffolk) singer Nancy Wallace performing in solo mode, accompanying herself on concertina, the first surprise to be found on her debut album *Old Stories* is the range of instruments she employs to economical, but always affecting, uses. The sometime Memory Band and Owl Service vocalist weaves delicate and minimal guitar around accordion, organ and the aforementioned squeezebox in a manner which suggests an influence from the more esoteric end of early 1970s folk, without ever sounding pastiche or retrogressive. Guest musicians Jennymay Logan on fiddle, Richard Lewis on hurdy gurdy and banjo and Simon Lord, also on banjo, sit easily in the gentle but bright blend.

The second surprise is the strength of melody in the 2010 BBC Folk Award nominee's own compositions. If your heart normally sinks at the prospect of yet another singer-songwriter rolling off the Joni Mitchell-lite production line (this century does seem to have more than its fair share, so far) then hearing Wallace's plaintive, immaculately constructed compositions brings a relief to jaded ears. Nancy's pretty, clipped and idiomatic style stamps a distinctive identity on this album and no immediate vocal influence springs to mind.

Lyrical, she treads the well-worn paths of love, unrequited love and unfaithful love with