

AVOURNEEN

Way Stations

Own Label, 15 Tracks, 62 Minutes

www.avourneen.com

Avourneen is a trio based in Denver Colorado and this is their second CD to be reviewed in IMM. The core group consists of Adam Goldstein (guitar, bouzouki), Cieran Morden (fiddle, mandolin, piano), and Alice Alister (bass). On *Way Stations* they are joined by Katie Burns (cello), John Lynskey (accordion), Rodney Sauer (accordion), and Marty Smith (bouzouki), Marty has become something of an online celebrity with his Sobell bouzouki playing. The inclusion of the guests here stamps the respect the traditional music community has for Avourneen's work.

The songs on the album include the old standard *Hills of Connemara*, the modern classic, Ralph McTell's *Clare to Here* and the Dave Mallet's *The Ballad of St Anne's Reel*, with an arrangement featuring a riff from the bouzouki and a sweet break into the Irish style reel on the fiddle.

Adam Goldstein has a clear tenor voice, not unlike Peter Stanstead in its intonation and diction, which gives the album more of a European than an American vibe, (check his French-style Remy) and the easy on the ear *Clasped to the Pig* and *Faro*. Goldstein is no lightweight when it comes to song writing either and his *Doolin Waltz* deserves attention and consideration by singers on the Wild Atlantic Way.

Tune wise there has been some deep thought put into the arrangements, which are never too fast or muddy, with the lyrical slow air *Seaglass Beach* being ripe for inclusion into the tradition worldwide. Their *Lark in the Morning* set is a tour de force, with a duet of bouzoukis leading the melody, before the fiddle brings in a counterpoint, turning convention on its head.

Way Stations is a huge step up from Avourneen's previous album *Sparrow*, which was a revelation in itself. The band prove that there's great Irish music in the mile high city and this album has attitude to match the altitude.

Seán Laffey