

ALAW 'MELODY' ALBUM REVIEWS

"These guys are something very special indeed... a really brilliant album of great great music... Three highly talented individuals but as a trio they really are a force to be reckoned with"

"The magnificently melodic sound of ALAW"

FRANK HENNESSY BBC Radio Wales 8.9.13

<http://www.netrhythms.co.uk/reviews.html#alaw>

Those with knowledge of the Welsh language will be familiar with the concept of "alaw", which quite literally means "melody", and this CD by the recently-constituted trio of Dylan Fowler (guitar, mandocello), Oliver Wilson-Dickson (fiddle) and Jamie Smith (accordion) is a joyful celebration of the unique brand of melody that characterises Welsh traditional music. I really love the infectious feel of the music-making here, which is characterised by the threesome's instinctive responses to the rhythmic and harmonic ideas contained within each tune.

Paradoxically, then, it also might be thought that the overall thrust of the music is almost relaxed in nature, but in the pleasingly laid-back sense (as on the syncopated track 2 medley, and the delicately phrased Gwen Lliw'r Lili, which itself derives from an earlier song-melody). Alaw captivate surprisingly intensely, however, especially on selections like the pair of Jigs at track 3 (the first of which, curiously, doesn't actually possess the jig metre).

There's not a hint of complacency or lack of spirit on the part of the musicians - far from it, since the playing fairly sparkles (albeit in an often slightly understated manner). Dylan's guitar work in particular is exemplary, and embodies a miraculous degree of sensitivity in its sheer deftness, also imparting a harp-like quality on occasion. Tempos don't tend to accelerate into overdrive, although the ensemble can certainly get a move on when required, as on the finale to the opening track and the invigorating final "gallops" of the lengthier tune-set that comprises track 9, which en route energetically embraces the Welsh folk dance Ty Coch Caerdydd. The tunes chosen, which are drawn from a variety of sources including books and recordings, often feature a mode containing both major and minor sixths (easier to hear than to explain!), and range

from the joyous song-steps of Craig y Ddinas and the beautifully unfolding, strangely strathspey-like tone-picture An Foren Teg (the actual origin of which is not credited in the enigmatic and tantalisingly incomplete booklet information - although thankfully the press release contains much useful additional detail) to the thoughtfully stately modal closer Wil a'I Fam. There's only one vocal item, Y Ddau Farch, which kicks off the fourth track in style and comes to the trio from the recorded singing of Meredydd Evans. This is a very rewarding and refreshingly different disc on which the musicians communicate their expertise and understanding with real affection (and feel no need to show off!), leaving the listener definitely wanting more.

David Kidman, September 2013

EP Review

<http://www.folkwales.org.uk/Magazine/Dec%202012/CD%20Reviews.html>

Alaw's EP is a little gem. **Alaw**, Welsh for melody, is the alluring interplay when violin and guitar meet, an amazing collaboration between Oli and Dylan Fowler, both musicians in Zapora and The Ian McMillan Orchestra, along with many successful forays with musicians and storytellers alike. Recorded just before Jamie joined the duo, Alaw's debut EP was made to cash in and boost publicity at this year's Festival Interceltique de Lorient; it's full of wonder and imagination, and spills over with glittering notes and runs, especially in the Nyth Y Gog sets, and is readily available on-line or at their gigs. There are only four sets, and these include Y Cariad Newydd, Jig Arglwydd Caernarfon and Y Ddau Farch. Dylan is the questing, probing magician accompanying Oli's dancing, artful fiddle; it just so happens to be bursting with balls! Now Oli and Dylan have recruited Jamie and they are planning a first full-length CD soon. This delightful and sparkling EP is a welcome pointer to the shape of things to come.

Mic Tems Dec 2012