



Traditional Music / By Daniel Neely

Yanks double up on latest album

many of the subsequent months organizing a successful Kickstarter fundraising campaign, which helped them forge on toward a second, follow-up album.

A year or so later, we finally have their sophomore effort and there's much to recommend. The group's playing is stronger, the arrangements more interesting and the effort more cohesive and balanced. The full group playing outstanding. For example, tracks like "I Have No Money / [...]" "Behind the Bush / [...]," "The Trip to Boston / [...]" and "Felix's Waltz" have fabulous energy and showcase the creativity and chemistry of The Yanks as a cohesive hole.

The group's good humor is seen on "If There Weren't Any Women In The World / ..." features Alderson on saxophone and invokes well the sound of groups like Paddy Killoran's Pride of Erin Orchestra and At the Racket.

Many tracks feature the drumming of album co-producer Josh Dukes. Dukes is an outstanding and very sensitive musician, whose drumming – both on snare and on bodhrán – adds intensity and helps define the group's sound.

Several tracks feature smaller arrangements that showcase its individual talents. For example, Earnest's playing on "Kitty Lie Over / [...]" is really quite lovely, as is Foley's on "Judy Ann's Waltz / [...]." Alderson distinguishes himself well on "Bold Thady Quill / [...]" and Gurney shines on "The New Century / [...]." The trio work (Earnest/Gurney/Foley) on "The Widow Boyle" is excellent as well.

The album also includes two vocal tracks, "One Morning in May" and "Adieu My Lovely Nancy," which feature Eamon O'Leary and Jefferson Hamer, a.k.a. the Murphy Beds. While O'Leary and Hamer's singing and harmonies are brilliant, the addition of The Yanks' smart arrangements make these tracks two of the album's great highlights. The 'Beds, are one of the best groups performing today, so it was a wise move to invite them onto the album. It was also something of a natural choice – O'Leary and Hamer are the hosts of the Sunday session at the Brass Monkey pub in New York City and the members of the Yanks are frequent visitors, so if it sounds like there is some built-in chemistry there,

it's because there is.

Perhaps the most impressive things about the album is its exceptionally high production standard – it just sounds magnificent. Credit for this goes in part to Sean Keegan (seankeegan.ie), a musician and engineer who has a growing and already sterling reputation. It also goes to Glenn Barratt. Barratt is a four-time Grammy award winner who has not only engineered numerous Gold and Platinum selling albums, he's worked in Irish music for 30 years. Over that time, Barratt has collaborated with the likes of Mick Moloney, Billy McComiskey, John Doyle, Seamus Egan, Eileen Ivers, Jerry O'Sullivan, Liz Carroll and many, many others. Together, Keegan and Barratt make a formidable pair.

Put all this together and you have a tremendous and formidable album. With "The Haymaker," The Yanks have given us something extraordinary that represents the Irish music tradition in America extraordinarily well. The playing is great, the band vibe is tight and the production is first rate. I can't recommend this one too highly. Visit www.yanksband.com for more information.

Truly, a double album is a daring thing for a band to release, but this is precisely what the Yanks, a band comprising four of Irish America's finest young musicians in Dylan Foley (fiddle), Dan Gurney (button accordion), Isaac Alderson (uilleann pipes & flute) and Sean Earnest (strings), have dared to do. Their new album "The Haymaker" includes 22 tracks over two discs and provides nearly an hour and a half of music. Lengthy? Yes. But they've set a very high musical standard that I am delighted to hear and I know readers of this column will be as well.

Many will remember The Yanks' eponymous debut, which captured the energy and excitement of the Catskills Irish Arts Week. It featured a lovely bit of playing and was an auspicious beginning for this young group. With ambition on their side, the Yanks spent