

— Reviews —

ALBIREO - NORTHERN CROSS

Albireo a double star, now that's a fine claim along with other clever Astronomic naming. It certainly is a precisely produced CD, clear separation of instruments, no wall of sound here. Sitting writing this I find my foot has started bouncing backwards and forwards and I'm slowly rocking along to the beat, very relaxing.

All the tracks are instrumental, mostly for dancing, but including a few tunes which I assume they use as intros etc. Strongly melodic, fiddle and concertinas leading the way and no percussion. They're show a good deal of flexibility straddling a wide range rhythmic styles. *Gathering Peascods* as a courtly dance, reminiscent of Tudor period dramas, along with the *Hole in the Wall* an old 3/2 hornpipe (nobody seems to know quite how these were originally played). *The Morning Star* with a reggae bass line very akin to the original Edward the 2nd, good old lumpy *Gypsy* and *Gloucester* hornpipes and an American selection. I particularly like the crisp spacious treatment they give to their one waltz, *Alfaz del Pi* (near Benidorm) composed by Steve Hodgkiss of the band. He also contributes a set of three polkas performed at a brisk, skippy dancers pace, fine tunes. The band's other composer Simon Heywood gives us a pair of reels, the first sounding very much like a French bourée to me, the second *The Venus of Levenshulme* is a grand tune. The final track *The Weavers March* is spun out as a polka, as with the other dance tracks they give the number of bars x repeats for anyone wanting to dance to the CD.

All in all a very entertaining CD; it has the variety to make it real pleasure to listen too, not just a dancers CD. Well worth adding to your collection.

Nick Howard

Flying Swan Records CYG001 CD
<http://www.albireo.co.uk/>

ANGLES - ANGLES

There appear to be nothing particularly

Germanic about this band, so presumably the name refers to the group's love of exploring different ways in which to treat a tune! A very French feel from the instrumentation of Cliff Stapleton (Hurdy-gurdy), Chris Walshaw (pipes, whistles), Richard Jones (piano accordion) is bolstered by a very French feel to some of the material. The musicians can boast past experience with bands as diverse as Blowzabella, Stocai, Waltzer, Duellists, Climax Ceilidh Band and Climax Chicago Blues Band and they draw on all that experience to tease out unusual and interesting arrangements. As you might expect, the playing is terrific and the material interesting - of the 15 tunes, Cliff Stapleton wrote 8, Richard Jones 6 and Chris Walshaw 1. Each tune get a track to itself, with one exception, and this allows the band to explore it. I must admit that after a while I was hoping that either there would be a medley of tunes in a track, or the players might explore the tune somewhat more radically, but as they profess to be aiming themselves firmly at the Eurodance market, that's probably not realistic. The record contains little information about the tunes, and no publishing or record label details - so they'll presumably get no royalties from it. Very interesting and enjoyable, but some may not want to play the album all at once. (They could do with a fiddle!)

Paul Burgess

www.anglesmusic.com

HILARY JAMES - ENGLISH SKETCHES

A lovely album by a lovely singer. Being as popular with musicians as with audiences, she has been able to gather a group of helpers who are all leaders in their own specialities. We have the indefatigable Simon Mayer on guitars, mandolin, mandocello and violin, Nick Cooper on cello, Paul Hutchinson on accordion, Paul Sartin on oboe and Simon Price on drums. Ed Quicks contribution to backing vocals is sufficiently fascinating to warrant listening to this album several times. The addition of David Pether on pipe organ on *Winter* (Shakespeare) was inspired.

The CD describes itself as "a celebration