

GALWAY INTERNATIONAL RETRO ORCHESTRA

Giro

Own Label

AGEM101

11 Tracks, 46 Minutes

www.girogalway.com

It's one of those names that could be a happy coincidence or a total contrivance. Whether or not it refers to this band's main means of support, Giro is certainly international and retro. And these lads (and lass) do seem to hang out around Galway, despite coming originally from Denmark, Japan, New Zealand and Canada. From this information you'll already have worked out that they were drawn together by a love of Irish music and strong drink. What won't be so obvious is their mastery of music from Scandinavia and what used to be called Eastern Europe, as well as Ireland of course.

In a slightly chaotic performance, GIRO run through 1920's New York Irish hornpipes, Klezmer dances, Swedish wedding marches, Carolan waltzes and straight trad reels, all with a hint of vaudeville comedy. Kyle Borey adds a couple of stage Irish songs, The Galway Races and Bridget Flynn, as well as applying his talented lips to flute and piccolo. Mayo Yanachi may or may not be the real name of GIRO's fiddle diva, but she combines a fine feel for the Irish tradition with an impressive ability to handle anything from the Arctic to the Balkans. Anders Trabjerg's accordion captures the crispness and frenzy of Kimmel and others racing to fit three tunes onto a two minute recording: the Far From Home set has a bounce and urgency rarely heard these days. Clarinetist Geoff Ward turns his hand to the banjolin for diddy-i, and shines on music from further east (beyond Blackrock even) including Anders' own tune The Devon Court Gypsies.

Every track is different, every arrangement unique, as this quartet mixes and matches, providing such ample variety, that Scotsman Niall McQuaid's guest appearance on tambourine is almost superfluous. From the opening Sunshine Hornpipe to the final gallop through Rocking the Baby, the Galway International Retro Orchestra delivers everything you'd expect and more. Authentic twentieth-century instruments, high quality production, that tambourine of course, and terrible taste in hats: these guys are worth checking out.

Alex Monaghan