

## NOCTAMBULE

### A Sweetish Tune

Noctambule Music, 9 Tracks, 55 Minutes

[www.noctambulemusic.com](http://www.noctambulemusic.com)

I was enjoying this album too much. It couldn't be that good. I sought a second opinion. I gave *A Sweetish Tune* the Facebook test. Posting up a link to Noctambule's YouTube clip, *Trip To Skye*, I added the comment, "A beautiful, reflective tune to help you through your day..." Straightaway, one friend said, "Thank you...it's beautiful". Another responded, "It hauntingly drowned out the news. God bless you for sharing it". So I wasn't on my own in being won over.

Noctambule is French for "night-owl", and the title of a work by British-Canadian poet Robert William Service. He used humour to convey stories about the Yukon. Noctambule use humour to share their love of traditional music. Noctambule are teacher and ace mandolin player Marla Fibish and psychiatrist and accomplished guitarist Bruce Victor. They certainly mess with your mind. I'm sure I've heard one or two of these tracks played faster, but this duo slow them right down so that a reel or a waltz becomes a deeply meaningful and reflective tune. Or maybe the song was always meant to be played that way – see how they keep you guessing? Traditional Irish mixes with new material in a similar vein. The whole album takes you on a thoughtful journey into places you knew way back, perhaps when you first started listening to this genre. There are a couple of O'Carolan tunes – *Blind Mary* and *Mr O'Connor* – which helps to earth the project in Irish soil. The duo also cover cheeky tune *The Creel*, which has been performed by everyone from Ewan McColl to Paul Brady. You can see anything goes here, which keeps the whole experience so entertaining and enlightening.

Amid the sweet joy and humour is James Keelaghan's *Cold Missouri Waters*, an intense song about one of the worst wildfires in American history – the Mann Gulch fire of 1949 – which took the lives of 13 fire-fighters. Bruce Victor's rough, crackling voice weeps with emotion as he shares this moving story of "thirteen stations of the cross to mark their fall". The duo also set to music a love poem by Lebanese philosopher Khalil Gibran, *Song Of The Wave*. Interestingly, one line sums up Bruce and Marla's sound – "We blend in melted brilliance".

The couple admitted that making the album turned out to be "a wonderful journey of discovery" as they created their own interpretations, while hoping always to "honour the tradition". It's a great example to other artists and bands hoping to put their own stamp on the tradition. Let both sorrow and joy flow. And as long as you're wonderfully creative about it, you won't go far wrong.

**Clive Price**