

never has been just for the Irish; *Beyond the Borders* is an apt descriptor for a global sound. — RWeir

THE JOHN BYRNE BAND

After the Wake

John Byrne 112009

John Byrne is an Irishman who moved to America some years back. I first got to know him through the fine band Patrick's Head. *After the Wake* is his solo debut. John's songs tap deeply into Irish tradition. They often sound ages old with that vein of melancholy found in Irish music, suffusing his voice with loss and yearning. Byrne's songs are rich with the sounds and themes of Irish tradition, one that survives in a modern world. That he is essentially a stranger transplanted here adds perspective and depth to the writing. The sadness that runs so deeply in so much Irish music is a rich vein here.

The album's feel sort of puts me in mind of an Irish Alejandro Escovedo. There are exceptions to the melancholy, most notably John's Dylan tribute/pastiche/fantasy "Boys Forget the Whale," which he built upon the bones of "Bob Dylan's 115th Dream." I especially like "Various Verses," inspired by memories of the Byrne family singing together as they shared songs, "A Song with No Words," "See You Then" and the heartbreaking "Already Gone" (not to be confused with the Eagles' hit song by that name).

Guitarist/banjo player Andy Keenan and keyboardist Devin Greenwood produced the set with a sure grip on songs and players. Fiddles by Sara Milonovich and Paraic Keane and whistles by Andy Goessling add lovely textures.

John apparently loves writing in 3/4 time. Oddly he has sequenced three of the four waltz times together, but that decision is justified by the raw strength of those songs.

An impressive work throughout. — MT

COLCANNON

Three Days in May

Oxford Road

You gotta love a band named for a cabbage dish. No offense if you love that comestible, but the band serves a considerably tastier cuisine. They're so good that it surprises many to learn that they're based in Boulder, Colo., not Ballymenone. This is Colcannon's eighth recording since Irish émigré Mick Bolger formed the band in 1984. His voice has some wear on it, but



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