

bohola**BMCD1001****Bo ho ho hola****18 tracks Running time 58.40****www.boholamusic.com**

The Chicago duo of Jimmy Keane and Pat Broaders are out with a Christmas album that is unlike most releases of that genre. It combines humour, music and song, tied together with narratives. It almost sounds like a sampled album, with bits and pieces tossed in.

The opening track sets the tone and the theme for the album. Broaders does a bit about a Christmas in the Irish Bronx, then going into the *Wren Boys* song, and Jimmy Keane follows with parts of Handel's *Messiah* and *Jingle Bells* as a combined tune. This manic approach is sustained through the work - and it does work.

Broader's narrative of a Christmas story is underlined by Keane's playing. The middle of the album is filled with the Yule tale of a young boy, and is reminiscent of Dylan Thomas's, *A Child's Christmas in Wales*. Although the story of New York Irish coming across in Broader's Dublin accent seems a bit incongruous, it fits the theme. Keane's arrangements and playing on piano accordion well played.

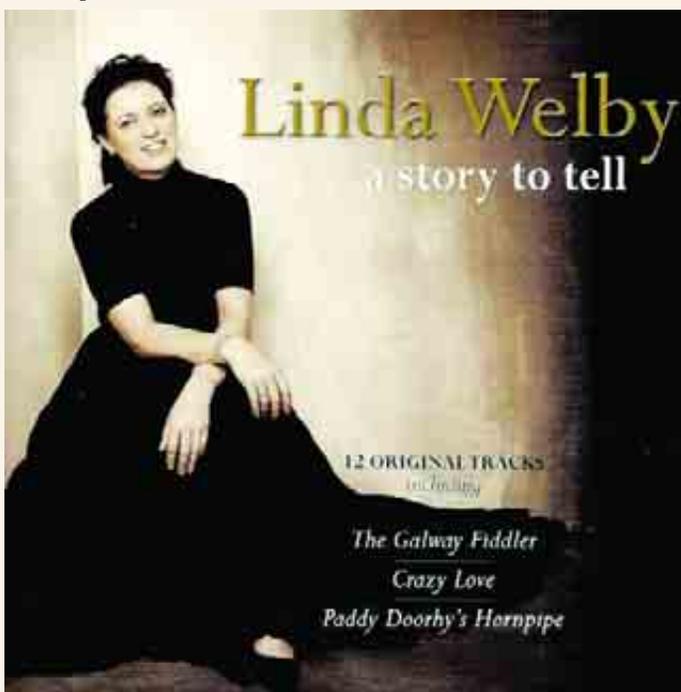
The songs cross all sorts of styles, such as the Pogue's, *Fairytale of New York*, to the plaintively delivered *The Bells of Paradis*, which is preceded by a subtly played *March to Fingal*. *Miss Fogarty's* is a song that recalls Keane's time in Green Fields of America. Broader's excellent rendition of *Boys of Barr na Sráide* is backed by Keane, and is followed by a well played *Chapleizod* by the duo.

They are joined on the album by former band-mate, Sean Cleland, on fiddle and vocals, Kathleen Keane and Mary Broaders on vocals, and Larry Gray on bass. 'bo-ho-ho- hola' finishes with a bit of whimsy - Frank Kelly's *Dear Nuala*, the twelve days of Christmas come to life, and *Recipe*, the attempted creation of a fruit cake with whiskey.

Bo-ho-ho-hola is not a typical Christmas album, but it is fun, well played and memorable. It was well thought out, and the invested work shows. Happy Christmas to all.

Brian G. Witt**LINDA WELBY****A Story to Tell****LAW Records LAWCD 0801****www.lindawelby.com**

An album of twelve original tracks by a relatively new name on the scene is an ambitious undertaking. Linda Welby is well up to the challenge she sets herself.



From the opening track, *The Galway Fiddler*, she sets a scene and continues through the other eleven tracks, the vocal offerings in particular, to recount stories - as the album title alludes to. These are stories that are either well-acted or very personal and Welby presents them very well.

The most enigmatic track on offer is *A Lonely Lovely Man*. This beautifully crafted and sung piece appears to give us a very sad story about a first love. I was almost tempted to break my first rule of reviewing and seek information outside that presented in the package.

Linda is blessed with a wide versatility in styles. She can switch from very folk-oriented tales of the fiddler to tracks that fit very easily into the 'Country and Irish' mode. Her personal-sounding songs include two lovely family tributes, *We Love you Mum* and *Dear Dad*. Although these are written and sung with very obvious personal notes, I can see either of them being covered by other artistes and becoming mainstays of request shows.

The singer/songwriter lists her influences as ranging from Sean Keane to Pat Boone and her output on this album certainly gives evidence of this. She is not corralled into a particular genre and as such will appeal to a very wide audience. In addition many of the songs have the strength to become hits for some established artistes.

Linda certainly has more than one "story to tell" and she tells all of them with imagination and some wonderful musical backing including her own multi-instrumental offerings.

Nicky Rossiter**BOYS OF THE LOUGH****Midwinter Live****Lough Records 010CD****15 tracks****www.boysofthelough.com**

The Boys of the Lough have been around for a long time now and have always been a Pan-Celtic musical experience.

No strangers to the North American circuit, the band pioneered Celtic Christmas shows back in the early 1990's and this album is from their 2007 Midwinter concert in Philadelphia. It is an exemplary live recording, concentrating on the music with no asides or spoken introductions, although we do get to hear the enthusiastic calling and clapping during the deserved standing ovation at the end of the concert. The key figures in all this have been Cathal McConnell, the Enniskillen flute player, and his mandolin and cittern playing partner, Dave Richardson from Northumbria. The band's latest incarnation includes Brendan Begley from Dingle on the button box and vocals, Shetlander Kevin Henderson on the fiddle and Highland-born Malcolm Stitt on the guitar.

The tunes have a leaning towards Kerry and Shetland and it is a testament to the musicianship of the players that these two regional styles are so well respected. The songs bring out the contrast between the Munster and Ulster song traditions as well as that between Irish and English language renditions of big seasonal ballads. For example, the English translation of the Scottish *The Christ Child's Lullaby*, sung by Cathal and his telling of the Christmas story in *The Wexford Carol*. Set this against Begley's *Coinne an Linbh Íosa* and the Irish *That Night In Bethlehem* (preceded by the Swedish tune *Sankt Staffan Han Rider*). The ensemble even tackles *The Blarney Pilgrim* on whistles - now there's guts for you.

Make sure your local folk DJ has this in their studio and beg them to play it at every opportunity. The track list is an impressive array of seasonal music that should be on the play-lists of radio stations everywhere; it fits the season perfectly.

And, if you need an excuse to buy this, then the cartoons by Alice Druitt in the style of Shultz are worth the price of the CD alone, seeing Brendan Begley as a box playing Charlie Brown - that's inspired!

Seán Laffey