

Mp3 The Crooked Jades - Shining Darkness



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Old-world music reinvented for a modern age: 19 original Americana-roots compositions from driving fiddle banjo tunes to beautiful, haunting ballads, all with the usual inspired arrangements and eclectic instrumentation. 19 MP3 Songs in this album (58:34) ! Related styles: FOLK: Appalachian Folk, COUNTRY: Americana People who are interested in Tom Waits Gillian Welch The New Lost City Ramblers should consider this download. Details: Illuminating the shadows and exploring the alchemy of art and darkness, this new release actualizes founder Jeff Kazors dream of the first all-original Crooked Jades album. Recorded in Fantasys famous Studio A by Bruce Kaphan (ex-American Music Club) and co-produced by Jeff and Bruce, Shining Darkness features the current lineup playing 19 original compositions from driving fiddle and banjo tunes to beautiful and haunting ballads, all with the usual inspired arrangements and eclectic instrumentation, including harmonium, bao (Vietnamese one-string box zither) and mbira in symphony with string-band standards fiddle, banjo, guitar, ukulele and arco bass. With this project The Crooked Jades renew their mission to reinvent old-world music for a modern age. With an old-time foundation they create their unique and soulful sound by interweaving the roots of Americana with the diverse musical influences of Europe and Africa, playing with a thrilling energy and innovation which has critics comparing them to everyone from Nick Cave and Tom Waits to The New Lost City Ramblers and Gillian Welch. The Crooked Jades, who have a tune from their last album Worlds on Fire in Sean Penns Oscar-nominated film Into the Wild will be playing just a week of CD release dates on the West Coast in August before heading off to Europe for a month of shows including the Belfast Festival at Queens. San Francisco-based leader and song-writer Jeff Kazor (guitar, lead vocals) will be joined by Leah Abramson of the Vancouver old-time band Dyad (ukulele, harmonium, female vocals), Boston bass player Charlie Rose of Asylum Street Spankers/South Austin Jug Band, Rose Sinclair of Heart Beats

fame (banjo, slide) and Portland native Sophie Vitells (fiddle). QUOTES Grounded in tradition, old-time string band music and mountain blues but with open horizons that take them, subtly, to other parts of the planet, they have a haunting spookiness, an organic pulse, and most importantly a clear vision...Instrumentally they're truly inspiring, getting original textures out of conventional stringband instruments and mixing them with (in this context) oddities like bass ukulele, harmonium, mbira, cello and Vietnamese jaw harp and bau zither. Vocally, they have that lonesome white blues sound which has its ancestry in Dock Boggs and the Carters but again they take it somewhere else...a consistently startling and addictive album." Shining Darkness Reviewed by Ian Anderson in UK magazine fRoots The Crooked Jades Shining Darkness (Jade Note, 2008) A couple of years ago, as I was preparing a profile of the band for the venerable folk magazine Sing Out!, one member remarked to me in passing that the Crooked Jades are "Jeff Kazor's project." That member is gone, as are all the others from the lineup I met and interviewed -- except, of course, for Kazor. That is, allow me to clarify, from the current live performing ensemble. Banjoist/slide-guitarist Seth Folsom, from the incarnation I knew, is a regular presence on Shining Darkness. Rose Sinclair has since replaced him. In any event, the Jades -- headquartered in San Francisco, where Kazor lives, though some other members reside or have resided on the East Coast -- manage to sound like the same group, if a musically evolving and deepening one, from album to album. Darkness is the fifth of them; there is also an EP released in 2004. (My reviews of two previous recordings, The Unfortunate Rake Vol. 2: Yellow Mercury (2003) and World's on Fire (2006), have appeared in this space.) Darkness marks the first of them to consist of all-original material, though in some ways this feels like detail and little else. Traditional music, here its resounding echo if not the thing itself, continues to define the soundscape. In their approach the Jades conjure up the notion that they almost literally skipped the 20th century, leaving one foot stranded in the 19th and the other striding forward into the 21st. Even so, Kazor's instrumental composition "Shining Darkness Interlude" brings to mind -- I'm sure not his intention -- an outtake from the Incredible String Band's 1968 The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter. Kazor, interestingly, does not play on the cut. Listening to the Jades has always been a curiously emotional experience for me, as if stirring sensations I could not have imagined "mere" music could touch. More prosaically, you could make the case, which as one called upon to render these judgments I am inclined to do, that no better neo-oldtime string band exists in America. There are some splendid competing bands out there (not least the other "crooked" one, the Massachusetts-based

Crooked Still), with impressively inventive ways of restating tradition, and I mean to demean none of these admirable outfits. It occurs to me, however, that what Kazor, working with the extraordinary musicians he recruits, does is so distinctive as to create its own category of folk recreation. There may be no way to state this except metaphorically, but while other modern folk bands strive to expand the tradition outward, Kazor and bandmates compress it inward until it feels like a black hole in which, you would swear, the world itself could collapse. As I learned from my several hours with his company, Kazor is an ethnomusicologist in all but academic degree, a formidably intelligent, curious man with encyclopedia-level knowledge of world musics, not to mention keen musical skills himself. If the Jades sound is rooted, proximately anyway, in Appalachia and Delta, it yet absorbs notes, tunings and instruments (for example, the Vietnamese one-stringed box zither) from places improbably far afield. The results never come across as other than natural and unforced. In fact, they barely draw attention to themselves beyond generating the faint but growing sense, as one listens attentively or casually, that a piece doesn't sound quite as one expects it to sound. That realization is always a pleasurable one. Yes, it's also scary and unsettling. Here, the roots are so long and deep that they give the impression, at moments, of having sunk through into another world. *Shining Darkness* is, no question, beautiful, but more than that, it is astounding. Reviewed by Jerome Clark - Rambles.Net "I love The Crooked Jades. Weird, ecstatic music. How can anyone with a brain dislike it? What was the Aldous Huxley line? "Stronger wine, madder music." -Peter Stampfel, The Holy Modal Rounders "This San Francisco quintet keep true to their old-time string band heart, yet in subtle, weird ways, they exaggerate the slightly-crazed aura of the rural pre-radio era music. It makes for a haunting, sophisticated trip to Appalachia. Mixing originals and traditional songs flawlessly, this might be the finest band to come out of the string-band resurgence." Boston Herald "The two adjectives that keep coming to me during repeated listenings to The Crooked Jades are profound and transcendent. This is visionary music, forged from the raw materials of old-time forms and instruments. It's easy to forget that the first old-time music recorded was a mirror of the times the musicians lived in. That was almost 100 years ago. Here, in the beginning of the 21st century, people in appreciable numbers are feeling as though they're teetering on the brink of apocalyptic times. Through the lens of tradition, The Crooked Jades are voicing this feeling convincingly and beautifully."-The Old-Time Herald "The Crooked Jades are embarrassingly addictive....they grab you by the throat, preach damnation, and move your hips all at once." - SF Weekly

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