

Mp3 Orpheum Bell - Pretty As You



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"Some kind of von Trapp Family pounding out raw country and gypsy waltzes at the last bar on the outskirts of town." . . . "It sounds like American Gaslight Music from 1919 played by recent Hungarian immigrants." 11 MP3 Songs COUNTRY: Americana, JAZZ: Gypsy Jazz Details: From barroom stomps to sultry lounge numbers, from country ballads to gypsy waltzes, Orpheum Bell's unique "Country and Eastern" sound enlists accordion, banjo, guitar, fiddle, clarinet, saw, autoharp, and the double bass. The band's members have been performing together in and around their home town of Ann Arbor since early 2005 and, with the release of their debut album, 'Pretty as You', are expanding their touring presence throughout Michigan and beyond. At the heart of Orpheum Bell's music lies Aaron Klein's raspy vocals and lyrical storytelling, once described as "downtrodden rural poetry," and Serge van der Voo's percussive hand at the upright bass, displaying an articulate style influenced by gypsy-jazz great Django Reinhardt. The band formed when, by chance, the two former Chicago-based bandmates met vocalist Merrill Hodnefield, who brought along penchants for musical saw, autoharp, and the violin. The depth and tenor of her voice evokes the 1940s, songs like "Rabbit Field" contrast with the clear, sweet counterpoint she provides to Klein's rough melodies on track's like "Something from Above." Multi-instrumentalist Shaun Williams on accordion, clarinet and banjo and violinist Paul Fine offer solo embellishments to Orpheum Bell's musical performances. Williams' rare skill on the accordion sets off songs like "Two Over Ten" with an audience-quieting sense of old-world drama. His rolling banjo on pieces like "Lucinda's Lament" draw the listener, as Klein's lyrics attest, into a rhythmic "waltz in the street." Violinist Paul Fine's eastern European origins and years of traditional bluegrass fiddling combine to form his inimitable style, which allows the band's original songs to range from traditional country ballads to instrumentals like "Metropolitan Waltz," for which he pulls out a rare (aluminum-horned) Tiebel Violine, that looks something

like a cross between a fiddle and an Edison-era phonograph.

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