

The cold days of winter have certainly warmed up for me by the release of three extremely hot traditional CDs. I was worried that we'd seen the last of CDs but, thankfully, they continue to be released, mostly by way of independent releases by the artists themselves but also by a few labels like New Folk Records in Minnesota.

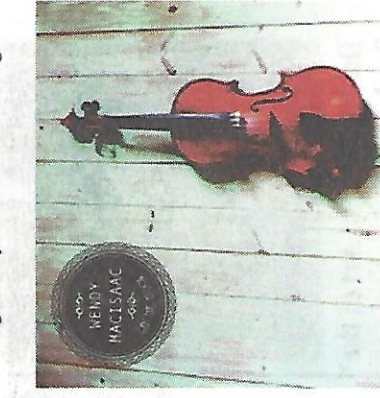
## Piping It In

### Jack Baker



One recording that came to me from the artist is "The Waylaid Man" by Michael McCague (www.michaelmccague.com). You probably know Michael best from his work with Teada, he's the bou-

his brother and as fine a fiddler as you can find, John McSherry, pipe and whistle wizard; Oisín MacDiarmada on fiddle; Brian McGrath on banjo and keyboards; Nollaig Casey on fiddle; Darragh



zouki player, Irish musicians know him as a guitar/bouzouki player that follows like a double-axel trailer, no matter who he's playing with. This CD opens up another side to Michael, that of musical composer and arranger. He composed and arranged all the tunes on this instrumental album and then assembled an all-star group of musicians to play them. Joining Michael are Dónal McCague,

and listen to. I know I'm biting off a lot saying that in that Nova Scotia is a hotbed of great fiddlers but I stand by my judgment that Wendy is best. There's something about Nova Scotia that brings out the best in fiddlers for dancing and that's what this CD is. Recorded live at a dance with Tracey Dares MacNeil on piano (always wonderful to listen to!) and Patrick Gillis on guitar you can sometimes hear the dancers pounding out a beat with their feet in the background. Wendy states that the pounding feet on the floor can give you playing an extra lift and you can sure hear it here as she works that fiddle putting out the liveliest of tunes for the dancers. Impossible to sit still when Wendy MacIsaac starts bowin'.

That's it for me this month, you can catch me at the store, 630-834-8108 or online at store@rampantion.com. Slainté

folk records.com). Led by Ken Onstad, New Folk has been releasing a steady stream of top-notch traditional Irish music recordings for some time now and, despite declining CD sales, it looks like they're going to continue doing so for folk like me, and others, who like their music in that format. I may be jumping the gun a bit on this CD since it won't be released till next month (March) but I got my review copy and it's just too darn good for me to be quiet.

The CD is "Bright and Early, Something to Crow About" and boy, is it ever. Coming together on the album are the combined talents of Paddy O'Brien on button accordion, Dáithí Sproule on guitar and Nathan Gourley on fiddle, three giants of Irish music. The CD features 16 tracks of reels, double jigs and hornpipes that will keep the dancers moving and the non-dancers tapping at least one toe. No vocals, all instrumental, this CD will introduce you to a bunch of tunes that Paddy has collected over the years and trots out now to let us enjoy the musical magic to this talented trio. I love this stuff, it flows like water, wraps itself around my soul and makes all the daily troubles go away, exactly what good music is supposed to do. Sorry to say that this one won't be in the store till next month but I can honestly say



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