

THE COLLECTORS RECORD AND COMPACT DISC MARKETPLACE

Goldmine

May 7th, 2010



The Wishing Tree
Ostara

Eagle Rock Entertainment

Grade: ★★★★★

Marillion guitarist Steve Rothery formed The Wishing Tree in 1996 as an outlet for his sensitive acoustic side, resulting in that year's *Carnival Of Souls*.

Fourteen years later, *Ostara* features the honey-laden vocals of Hannah Stobart, who adds a classy veneer to this prog-lite stew of Blackmore's Night-type folk-rock. Stobart can really sing. Her early Stevie Nicks affectations easily slide into a more Celtic and Gaelic vibe. The creative and unusual melodic and harmonic inventions enhance the already atmospheric dreamscape, so much so that when Rothery breaks the calm by tearing off a solo, it's all the more dramatic.

The balladry is sumptuous. It's really Stobart's show, and she makes the most of it. Armed with her husband/drummer Paul Craddick and Rothery's string wizardry on electric and acoustic guitars, mandolin and bass, her original compositions — and those co-written with Rothery — prove haunting and memorable.

— Mike Greenblatt