

Creaking Tree String Quartet

The Soundtrack

By Kerry Doole

Exclaim! Magazine

November, 2007

Categorising the sound of this Toronto-based instrumental acoustic ensemble is an exercise in futility. They simply pay no heed to stylistic boundaries and have the technical and creative skills to convince in a multitude of settings. They earned a Juno nomination with their eponymous 2003 debut and have since won numerous awards in Canada and internationally. Expect similar accolades to be heaped upon this adventurous and appealing disc. CTSQ reunited with Nashville producer Bil VornDick for *The Soundtrack* and it's a partnership that works. The bluegrass roots of violinist John Showman and mandolinist Andrew Collins (they still play together in the wonderful Foggy Hometown Boys) show through on some tunes but chamber music and avant-garde jazz elements are equally audible. There's a vigorous, violin-driven gypsy feel to "Phoenix Lair," while the following track, "John and Edna," has a haunting Morricone-like mood. All four members (guitarist Brad Keller and bassist Brian Kobayakawa round out the Quartet) compose individually, which helps account for the group's variety. The album title is apt and, along with such evocative song titles as "Spacehead" (a nine-minute epic) and "Lithograph Lizard," it encourages the listener to create complementary short films in their imagination. Lovely stuff. (Independent)