

A Guide To The Star Ratings In Maverick:

★ Avoid ★★ Poor ★★★ Good ★★★★ Very Good ★★★★★ Excellent

The Stagger & Sway BREAK TIL YOU BEND

Working Stiff Records

★★★★

Oregon-based band of troubadours turn out a rocking slice of hard hitting Americana

The Stagger and Sway centre their music around the songwriting and melodies of vocalist Mike Last, who also adds guitar and harmonica, Stagger & Sway hail from Eugene, Oregon where they have built up an enviable live reputation. Alongside Mike are Jerry 'Groove' Abelin on bass, Joe Knapp on guitar and the impressively named Kenjamin S.G. Howe III on drums. If you like your Americana a bit rough at the edges, with a sprawling Drive By Truckers feel allied to Wilco-esque stories sprinkled with traces of Tom Petty and Uncle Tupelo then this band is for you. On my initial listen I was going to put this in the 'same old, same old' category—one of a thousand guitar-based bands singing about towns and country folk. However after a few listens (yes—we reviewers do listen more than once!) I found my foot tapping along, breaking off from what I was doing as a lyric caught my attention and drew me into the song.

Standouts are the introspective *Sh*t Adv*ce* which opens with gently drummed acoustic guitar before building up to a lovely driven beat allied to some great lyrics reflecting on the stuff that people keep trying to tell you on how to live. *Sam Bond's Garage* is a tribute to a real bar in Eugene and some colourful tales are related in this lively tune, with some tasty guitar licks, as the folks: '...drink beer from wide-mouthed mason jars...' and '...through the door time stands still...' *Wyoming* is a song that reminds you of something Richmond Fontaine regularly pull, but Stagger & Sway bring their own feel to a song, that makes you feel and see the wide open expanses as some gentle harmonica underpins some lovely restrained singing. Praise must also go to the infectious *Eyes Like David Bowie* a slow-paced ballad about trying to forget a lover who is captured in a photograph where she has the aforementioned eyes. Finally give it a few seconds after the last track as there is worth waiting for an uncredited 'hidden track' coming. **John Jobling**

www.myspace.com/thestaggerandsway

