

VA – “Kaleidoscope – Musicians of Door County”

(BT Productions, 2005, CD)

This diverse collection spotlights the work of a number of recording artists from Door County, Wisconsin; the 11 pieces herein are clearly inspired by the natural beauty and serenity of their surroundings. Every song is by a different artist, although various musicians play and write cooperatively on a number of cuts; most lean toward the folkier side of the musical spectrum, in a classic singer-songwriter vein, although a few clearly break out of the mold and reach out into different directions. Jay Whitney’s “How Can I Say Goodbye” is one of those, a funky, soulful take with its earthy vocal delivery; another is Don Thompson’s “Don’t Stop Pickin’,” a spirited upbeat tune sporting a solid country flavor. Vocalist Kim Waters (of Rasa) opens the set with “The Dress,” sounding very much like an Irish traditional piece, co-written by Mike King and co-producer Pete Thelen, the latter better known for his blues-today website and CDs. Thelen’s own contribution to the set is “Footsteps,” an introspective number with a mysterious David Sylvian-esque arrangement. Lucy Hagen’s alto vocal on the intensely personal “I’m Gone” is supported beautifully by two acoustic guitars and cello. Jeanne Kuhns is a gifted storyteller, as her contribution “Isabel” easily illustrates. Other featured artists include Fred Alley, Julian Hagen, Mark Raddatz, and Chris Alley. Co-producer (and engineer for the entire set) Hans Christian’s pensive and beautiful instrumental “The Water Is Wide,” performed on bass, cello, nyckelharpa and piano closes this set nicely. A superbly produced set worthy of attention. – *Peter Thelen*

[www.kaleidoscopecd.com]