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Music - October 2010

Folk/World Music

Windward Round Mountain

www.roundmountainmusic.com

Story by *Emily Drabanski*

Windward, the latest brainchild of Round Mountain—Santa Fe's talented brothers Char and Robby Rothschild—is the duo's third album, and this playful yet reflective recording marks an important transition. A year ago, they left the comforts of day jobs and families and headed windward, so to speak, to promote this CD around the country.

The brothers' beautiful harmonies and poetic lyrics have often earned them comparisons with Simon and Garfunkel. But their hypnotic performances on an eclectic assortment of instruments produce what might be best called world-roots music—a sound exotic yet universally familiar. Their songs contain riffs and syncopations that run the gamut of Appalachian, Balkan, Turkish, and Scottish melodies. Both write songs, and each brings exceptional musicianship to the mix. As on their previous albums, they're joined by double-bassist Jon Gagan, who also skillfully recorded the sessions as engineer and co-producer. (Gagan primarily performs with international guitar sensation Ottmar Liebert.) "Knowing we were going out on the road, we aimed for a sound that's closer to our live performances," says Char, the elder brother.

The Rothschilds have studied classical and ethnic music forms. "We honor and acknowledge all of the various musical influences that have come into our lives," says Char, who dazzles audiences with his ability to literally juggle musical instruments, often playing trumpet or bagpipes with one hand and accordion with the other. He adds those instruments' rich musical textures to *Windward*, as well as banjo, dobro, guitar, and saz (Turkish lute).

Although Robby plays bouzouki, he mainly provides the rhythm, on calabash, *djembe*, *tupon*, and many other percussion instruments, including the *cajón* (box), a Spanish percussion instrument on which he sits, playing barehanded. He often adds his sweet, high voice and the angelic, harp-like sounds of the *kora*, a West African stringed instrument, as in "Bear and Be Born."

All of the songs are memorable, but several stand out: "Don't Lie Down," with its lively drumming and highland bagpipes, beckons the listener to persevere in life; "La Acequia" blends English and Spanish lyrics and flows as easily as the subject named in its title; "Goodnight Animals" is a gentle lullaby to one's animal nature; and "Let Somebody Know You" is a poignant dialogue between a youth and an adult.

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Play "La Acequia"
from *Windward*

