

## • MUSIC •



ROUGH AROUND THE  
EDGES  
Syncopaths  
[Self-produced]  
[www.syncopaths.com](http://www.syncopaths.com)

**T**HE TITLE is an apology that need not be given, for though this is a “warts and all” live recording of one of Southern California’s premier contra dance bands, such is the spirit of the band that even the mistakes are engaging.

If a live audio recording of a band playing for dancers does-

n’t sound like a must-hear, then it should be said that the Syncopaths are hardly your usual dance band.

Pianist (and producer) Jeff Spero takes the chord patterns into some hitherto fore uncharted territory, and melody players Ryan McKasson (fiddle) and Bill Flores (mandolin, banjo and guitar) hold down the fort admirably but are elastic enough to take off alongside.

The bodhrán playing of Christa Burch anchors it all too, so it never stops being danceable, even when the solos get into some strange, at times almost psychedelic explorations, such as the delicate piano/banjo/fiddle interplay that colors the second tune set, or the jazzy piano riffs that infuse the jig set that follows it.

On the whole they do a remarkable job of simultaneously keeping the pulse for the dancers while still being an excellent, and never boring, “jam band.”

My only complaint is that Burch, one of the very finest singers on the LA scene, sings only one song, and it’s a fairly standard version of the fairly standard “Wild Mountain Thyme.” It’s a minor quibble, since songs are not a dance band’s main domain, but I’d love to hear a concert or a studio album by these guys. Once non-dance music is thrown in the mix as well, the possibilities are endless—such is the skill of the players.

Go to [www.syncopaths.com](http://www.syncopaths.com) for more information, or to purchase this recording.

—Dave Soyars