

## Marley's Ghost

*Ghost Town*

(SAGE ARTS)

**T**he bittersweet, atmospheric soundtrack for the wayfaring stranger's journey, *Ghost Town* sees this veteran California band embracing deep country roots while sweetening the pot with a dash of folk, gospel and even bluegrass. The album is an audio illustration of wide-open prairies, craggy southwestern trails and campfires under starry skies.

The band's ninth studio release features the handprint of producer Cowboy Jack Clement, who is an absolute wizard when it comes to capturing the "western" that has long since been dropped from the once proud label "country and western" music. Clement helps Marley's Ghost awaken a Marty-Robbins-meets-Waylon-Jennings-by-way-of-Bakersfield spirit that makes for an Americana masterpiece.

Standouts include a tender, gorgeous take on Warren Zevon's "She's Too Good For Me" and the blue-sky warmth of the wandering tale "Travelin' Teardrop Blues," featuring an open E chord more expansive than the Great Plains themselves. Also noteworthy is the accordion-laced, Tex-Mex vibe of "My Love Will Not Change." As musical artisans, the band incorporates mandolins, pedal steel, keys and violin into personal song structures.

*Ghost Town* is, in essence, a timeout from the clutter of the commercial musical universe, to stop and smell the proverbial musical roses—sweet as a desert rain.

—MARK URICHECK

