

# THE BELLYACHERS **PRESS**

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**Working in, around, outside and against the conventions, The Bellyachers do a very credible job of making honky-tonk relevant, and cool.**

John Conquest | Third Coast Music | 1.03

Call me a softy, but man the new Bellyachers album, *Heavy in My Hands*, knocks me silly. After letting it sit in a pile on my desk for three months, I finally put the damn thing in the box, then spent the rest of the afternoon kicking myself for waiting so long. A little Texas honky-tonk, some Bakersfield twang, alt-country whatever, spaghetti western, a dash of psychedelia, and even some straight-up Nashville pop - the Bellyachers have a fine little hunk of plastic on their hands. It's sweet and edgy and though it works some well-worn themes, it never sounds tired. I like it. Go figure.

John O'Neill | San Francisco Bay Guardian | 4.9.03

How many bands are there. Surely the figure is well into the thousands. And how many original songs? The sum would be the number of bands squared, at least. How many debut discs each year? Hundreds and hundreds, if the volume of our mail is any indication.

How many of those debut discs are as impressive as "Bottoms Up" (Gut Records) by the Bellyachers? Very few indeed. When it comes to the Bellyachers, there's very little to complain about.

Buzz McClain | The Washington Post | 2.27.01

What a great way to start the year. The Bellyachers have been around since 1997, playing soulful alt-country/Tex-Mex music in clubs all over. The newest record, "*Heavy in My Hands*," is loaded with Emmylou Harris harmonies and sweet steel guitar. It's a record to which you can listen over and over and over. That's what's nice about music that doesn't depend on trends and hype. Ironically, alt-country is pretty happening right now. But who wouldn't be a sucker for a country version of Van Halen's "*Jamie's Cryin'*," with some sweet female harmonies?

Tony Hicks | Contra Costa Times | 1.10.03

San Francisco's Bellyachers are a breath of fresh country air in a city infamous for 1980s cover bands and novelty acts. Their Honky-Tonk influenced Americana incorporates bits of Western Swing Revival, Country Rock, and close harmonies that swirl in haunting, pastoral tones and cosmic American musical soul. The tasteful electric guitar picking passionately interweaves with warm pedal steel notes like a pair of newlyweds, but it is the celestial, towering harmonies of Sandra Mello and Melody Baldwin-Baroz that gives this band wings. The Bellyachers manage to create outland, classic Americana without painting themselves into a complete retro corner. Their country music is as timeless and innovative as their influences.

**Fabulous musicianship and stellar song writing make Oakland's Bellyachers much more than just another alt. country band. The group's sound is part Bakersfield twang and part Texas honky-tonk, with lots of jangly rock guitar and a little Mexican-border influence. Frontwoman and bassist Sandra Mello has a confident, unassuming voice that will remind you of Loretta Lynn, but her lyrics are smarter, darker, and funnier. The Bellyachers never complain about a honky-tonkin' man who just won't stay home. In these songs, it's the gals who go out drinkin', fightin', and drivin' down long lonesome roads. Mello's tight, effortless harmonies with singer and rhythm guitarist Melody Baldwin-Baroz are powerful and mesmerizing, on stage and on CD. Rounding out the group are guitarist Brian Mello and drummer Peter Craft. The Bellyachers may be unsigned now, but probably not for long. They are shopping their just-finished *Heavy in My Hands* CD for a friendly record label.**

East Bay Express | Best of the East Bay | 5.02

Even with so much good music coming out of alt-country - or whatever you want to call it - arena these days, *Bottoms Up* from The Bellyachers is a true delight. The subtlety and common sense with which they approach honky-tonk ballads and hillbilly ravers is enough to make anybody long for the smoky back room at Tootsie's Orchid Lounge. That's not to say The Bellyachers limit themselves to Nashville tonker styles. There's little bit of everything in their sound - from Outlaw country to Bakersfield to Texas dance hall - and all of it has clearly been thoughtfully absorbed and, rather than just spat back out, actually interpreted. This San Francisco-based group's front woman, bassist and songwriter Sandra Mello convincingly conveys emotion with the easy grace of Loretta Lynn and with lyrics that are far more poetic and honest than most. The Bellyachers even fit a reworking of Kurt Weill's "Alabama Song" into the title track and do it so smoothly that it almost sneaks by on the first listen. *Bottoms Up* is a must-listen whether you're a fan of Buck Owens, Willie and Waylon, or Uncle Tupelo.

Clay Steakley | Performing Songwriter | 9.01  
Do It Yourself Spotlight Artist 2002

Even though they're from The Bay Area, The Bellyachers resonate with border influences. Call their sound alt-Tex-Mex. The singing is mostly handled by bassist Sandra Mello who does terrific harmonizing with guitarist Melody Baldwin-Baroz. *Heavy In My Hands* often addresses the struggle between the head and the heart. The title track is just instrumental for a quite a while as it establishes a spooky vibe that something on the weird side is about to happen or already did. With the help of a horn and strummy flamenco guitar, it sounds like something Love would have recorded in the 1960s. "Very Married" is honky tonk by a honky who's in a funk: "I'm not feeling very married any more/It looks like love stood up and showed itself the door." In "Death Valley," you can feel shimmering heat in the boiling sun. Fueled at one point by an evocative accordion solo, this is a celebration of burnin' love in the hottest place on Earth.

Tony Peyser  
Santa Monica Daily Mirror | 9.11.02