



THE RAGPICKER STRING BAND (YELLOW DOG)

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With a touching faith in physical recordings and respect for my advanced years, folk labels send me more string band CDs than you know exist, most cheerful-to-doleful at best. This Memphis trio is quite a bit more. Equable vocalist-guitarist Mary Flower, fingerpicking multi-threat Martin Grosswendt, and mandolin-wielding star of the show Rich DelGrosso announce themselves with DelGrosso's incorrigible cover of another old folkie you never heard of's "Google Blues," about the dangers of picking up women at bars where they can vet you on wi-fi. DelGrosso's fickle-vixen "Motel Towel" and scag-bagging "Street Doctor Blues" also have a modern feel, but his mandolin transports even this material to a realm not much less lyrical than Flower's unflappable rendition of Lil Johnson's 90-year-old "Minor Blues" or Grosswendt's deft revivals of two quite distinct Sleepy John Estes numbers. Also deft: the cover of Thelonious's "Blue Monk" and the theft of Dylan's "Bucket of Rain." **A MINUS**