



Karen Mal **"The Space Between"** Waterbug Records

Following her 2005 sophomore outing **"Dark-Eyed Sailor,"** a collection of mostly traditional songs, on **"The Space Between"** Mal unveils her latest creations and co-writes, plus a few select covers. The album was produced by Austin, Texas based, Princeton, New Jersey born solo singer/songwriter Bill Small - also a member of Walt Wilkins' Mystiqueros. Dan Navarro of Lowen & Navarro designed the cover art. Mal's solo debut **"Mercury's Wings"** [+] featured a number of collaborations with the late Fred Alley [d. 2001] – Alley was a co-founder of the American Folklore Theatre (AFT) in Door County, Wisconsin where Mal worked for a considerable portion of the 1990's – and **"The Space Between"** opens with their "Falling," a travelogue that also recalls the loss of love.

Karen's "Surprise" counsels the listener to always be prepared for the unexpected in this life – *"You won't see a shooting star, if you are always looking down,"* and is followed by "When I Was Three" her recollection of 'a more innocent age.' Co-written with 2003 Kerrville New Folk Song Contest winner Jonathan Byrd, the lyrically picturesque "The Space Between" – *"The canyon walls are bookends painted red, brown and green, Round the river running through the space between"* - reflects upon love that mysteriously comes and goes. The first cover tune is Rachel Ries' lyrically sly and teasing "For Only You" - *"Come to me, come tonight"* - the title cut of this South Dakota, Chicago based musician's 2005 sophomore solo album. Mal and former Washington D.C., now California coast based singer/songwriter Steve Key [and 1991 Kerrville New Folk winner] co-penned the tender entreaty that unfolds "Beneath My Quilt," and it's followed by Karen's arrangement of the traditional melody "Flavia."

Mal returns, for her, to a familiar subject with "A Sailor Returns To The Sea," the memory of passion lost to a wanderer whose true love was the sea, the sky and the infinite horizon; the "Suitcase Full Of Memories" is similarly a restless traveller. David Glaser, a Maryland based musician, co-wrote "Everything About You" with Mal and their lyrical hook is located in the repeated line *"I love everything about you, Except the way you don't love me."* The penultimate cut "Te Acuerdo En Mis Suenos" - it translates as "I Remember You In My Prayers" – features a traditional waltz paced public domain melody allied to Karen's Spanish lyric. **"The Space Between"** closes with the Jonathan Byrd original "White Cloud."

Note.

[+] – Karen composed the album title song as a memorial to Fred Alley.

Folkwax Score 7 out of 10

Arthur Wood.

Kerrville Kronikles 11/07.