

Akleja
Wasser und Erde

Akleja (51 mins)

★★★★★

Nyckelharpa duo are really in their element



Akleja are *nyckelharpa* players Regina Kunkel and Björn Kaidel (who also plays guitar and

Irish *bouzouki*). *Wasser und Erde* (Water and Earth) is an often intoxicating set of instrumental folk tunes and melodies, many featuring two *nyckelharpas* together – a rarity even in the instrument's home country of Sweden. The duo have studied and performed in the country often, and this set was recorded there last November. Comprising 14 tunes, it opens with the not altogether burning question: 'Sind die Rüben Rieb?' (Are The Turnips Ripe?), a north-east German *polonaise* extracted from a small set of surviving tunes from a 19th century player. That's followed by two original tunes from Kunkel, and then more flowing, ebbing *polskas*, *angloise*, *mazurkas*, minuets and *schottisches*, either by Kunkel and Kaidel, or drawn from old tune books. As such, there are strong parallels with contemporary English instrumentalists, such as Leveret, who mix original and traditional tunes from ancient sources.

Throughout, the playing is beautiful, and packed with almost-tactile melodies. Musically, it's an easy place to get lost in, a retreat in sound that repeatedly works its charms.

TIM CUMMING

TRACK TO TRY *Herbststernenuett*

The Askew Sisters
Enclosure

Dakmere Music (48 mins)

★★★★★

I know why the caged sisters sing



The Askews have released some of the most striking folk music of recent years, from Hazel's involvement in Lady Maisery and Coven; Emily's folk-meets-early-music album *Alchemy*, her fiddle trio Alma, and work for Shakespeare's Globe; as well as their three albums as a duo, including the Spiral Earth Best Traditional Album of 2015, *In the Air or the Earth*.

Enclosure takes its themes from the land enclosures of the 18th and 19th centuries, and is a metaphor for disconnection, captivity, place



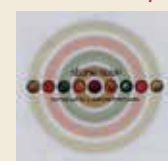
TOP OF THE WORLD
TRACK 6

Cormac Byrne & Adam Summerhayes
Stone Soup

Extinct Records/Nimbus Alliance (53 mins)

★★★★★

Duo made of strong stock throw ingredients into the pot for a hearty cup of improv



This is an audacious piece of work by two accomplished musicians. Adam Summerhayes is a classically trained fiddler with a rich Northumbrian, Celtic and Eastern European heritage.

Having travelled the world playing concertos, he has been drawn back to his folk roots. He asked Irish *bodhrán* percussionist Cormac Byrne to join his latest project, the Gypsy-Celtic-klezmer fusion of Dodo Street Band, and this is an organic offshoot from that meeting. In a Derbyshire kitchen late one night,

they conceived the idea to record an improvised album over the space of two nights. With its emphasis on the passage of a night and its pace and rhythm, it evokes both contemporary and Indian classical music.

Byrne brought a *marimbula* and *berimbau* into the studio to add extra texture to this sonic 'stone soup.' The first tones of fiddle feel Eastern, like a slow *alap*, before the rhythm builds, pulling the sound west towards something akin to klezmer. The whole is very satisfying.

NATHANIEL HANDY

TRACK TO TRY *Arising: Part 1*

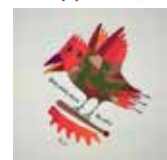
Balaklava Blues

Fly

Six Degrees (59 mins)

★★★★★

Ukrainian folk tunes take flight in support of revolution



Marichka and Mark Marczyk's Balaklava Blues was realised on the barricades during the 2014 Ukrainian

revolution. Inspired by the traditional folk music from the part of Ukraine afflicted by war and dedicated to supporting those still fighting for democracy and freedom, they started singing and performing together, creating one of the most innovative and emotionally powerful projects on the European music scene.

Fly, their debut long play, is filled with monumental, energetic beats and haunting, white-voiced singing by Marichka Marczyk in both English and Ukrainian. The album echoes with works of Nicola Cruz and Gooral and it speaks with an honesty and emotiveness that would be understood and admired by both the audience at a folk music festival and at a warehouse all-night rave. *Fly* showcases the interesting versatility of the musicians: 'Boom Boom' is embroidered with intricate, detailed production and delicate vocal arrangements, 'Underground' shouts out an *a capella* manifesto and 'Balloons' is a bittersweet waltz ballad. 'Sex', a track tucked in the middle of these musical and political explorations, is an unexpected, humorous pastiche

of an erotic R&B song that could successfully win over a nightclub dance floor. Marichka and Mark Marczyk, juggling with musical ideas and statements, are trying to heal the trauma and reclaim their freedom of expression, while indeed creating a unique piece of art.

AGNIESZKA UJMA

TRACK TO TRY *Boom Boom*

Banter
Dare

Mrs Casey Records (42 mins)

★★★★★

Mad bants with the world's smallest big band



Featuring Simon Care on melodeon and concertina, with Nina Zella on keyboards and vocals, and brass

and percussion from Tim Walker, this well-connected trio still style themselves as 'the world's smallest big band,' and, as on their bracing debut *Yes*, they can make a pretty big noise if it suits them. They've been gigging for the past 18 months since that striking introduction, and when they lay into the traditional dance tunes here, as they often do, their sheer gusto is impressively infectious and enjoyable.

On the other hand, the several self-penned tracks tend towards the disappointingly underwhelming, straining for lyrical relevance but mostly just sounding hackneyed, despite their obvious instrumental skills and a continuing cheery disregard for musical boundaries. Unfortunately, any pleasure to be had from its diversity quickly goes astray in the face of the collection's irritating ups and downs. Matters could well be very different in the live arena, of course.

Quite what a virtually unreconstructed take on The Police's always dubious 'Roxanne' is doing here, let alone closing the album on a faintly desperate note, is anybody's guess.

KEVIN BOURKE

TRACK TO TRY *Candlelight Fisherman*

The Brothers Gillespie
The Fell

The Brothers Gillespie (42 mins)

★★★★★

Folk from Northumberland, steeped in the natural world



Bosky and fecund, the second album from Northumberland's Brothers Gillespie is steeped in the

gently lilting folk sensibility and travelling-man observation of the natural world that marks the whole scene encompassing new folk and eco-activism. Naturally enough, the brothers' music evokes comparisons with Sam Lee – the nightingale-stalking fireside folkie of the East London scene, whom they have supported on tour. There is also more than a hint of The Waterboys' mystical Celtic balladry, such as on the plaintive whistle airs of 'Coventina's Daughter'.

The self-penned numbers have an almost pre-industrial quality, with a hint of American country. The brothers' finger-picking guitar, fiddle and mandolin are complemented by Siannie Moodie's *clarsach* (Celtic harp) and percussion from Tim Lane. There's also a spare, simple take on the traditional 'The Road to Dundee' and a cover of Michelle Shocked's 'Blackberry Blossom'.

The duo's sound has a consciously cultivated archaic sound and turn of phrase. For anyone who remembers a time when both folkie sensibilities and eco-activism were distinctly uncool, this fresh young sound is striking, stirring and hopeful in its idealism.

NATHANIEL HANDY

TRACK TO TRY *Golden One*

Dervish

The Great Irish Songbook

Rounder Records (63 mins)

★★★★★

To celebrate 30 years, the Irish band head across the Atlantic



Dervish mark 30 years together with their first studio album in more than a decade and the first to be released on American roots label Rounder Records, home to luminaries such as Alison Krauss, Gregg Allman and Steve Martin.

Not surprisingly, the accent here – on a baker's dozen of songs culled from the Irish songbook – is decidedly transatlantic, Dervish staying discreetly in the background to support an eclectic array of vocalists, some more persuasive than others.

The joker in the pack is actor Brendan Gleeson's 'The Rocky Road to Dublin', which manages to be simultaneously spirited and underplayed. There's characteristically morose take on Andy Irvine's classic 'The West Coast of Clare', Kate Rusby's gorgeously melancholic 'Down by the Sally Gardens' and the bluegrass bite and

brio of The SteelDrivers' 'There's Whiskey in the Jar'.

Dervish's own Cathy Jordan takes the lead on two tracks with Steve Earle, Imelda May, Vince Gill, Andrea Corr and Abigail Washburn providing piquancy or poetry to a veritable 'greatest hits' collection of traditional Irish favourites. The musical accompaniment is low-key, Sinéad O'Connor collaborator Graham Henderson's production stressing the mellow and mellifluous. All it needs is a glass of the black stuff and a turf fire.

MICHAEL QUINN

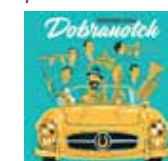
TRACK TO TRY *There's Whiskey in the Jar*

Dobranotch
Mercedes Kolo

CPL Music (64 mins)

★★★★★

Boisterous party klezmer band from St Petersburg



The Finnish harmonica band Sväng have made a series of photographs on different modes of transport – motorbike sidecar, railway maintenance vehicle, hot air balloon – and Dobranotch create a similar feel on the cover of *Mercedes Kolo*, though the badge has been replaced by a horseshoe, perhaps for luck.

Dobranotch (Goodnight) are a Russian band playing klezmer and good-time party music with lyrics mainly in Russian and Yiddish. Their sound is brassy and boisterous, often excessively so. Although they're from St Petersburg, there's a touch of underworld Odessa in there. There are novelties here in 'Ya Rayah' the Algerian song (by Dahmane El Harrachi) popularised by Rachid Taha and 'Son', a Latin-flavoured Russian song by Alec Kopyt of the Amsterdam Klezmer Band. Fun though this is, Dobranotch's 2018 album, *20 Years*, had more variety.

SIMON BROUGHTON

TRACK TO TRY *Son*

Dick Gaughan
Handful of Earth

Topic Records (45 mins)

★★★★★

A classic protest album that feels as relevant now as ever



When this album was released in November 1981, the year had already seen riots in Brixton, Toxteth and Moss Side, the death of Bobby Sands, the birth of the SDP and Murdoch's purchasing of *The Times* newspapers – all indicators of the tumultuous socio-political battles that would be lost and won, carving deep channels that our society still flows down today. As such, the politics and protest, as well as the storytelling and passion embedded in Gaughan's *Handful of Earth*, remains a potent force, not a museum curiosity, at a time when our politics, in the broadest sense, seem on the poise of significant change.

SIMON BROUGHTON

TRACK TO TRY *Son*

Flook

Ancora

Flatfish Records (50 mins)

★★★★★

Flook alive! Anglo-Irish quartet are back after almost 15 years



After early success with three albums that positioned them as a force to be reckoned with, Flook went silent in the studio and disbanded for a

five-year stretch before reassembling in 2013. A near decade and a half since 2005's *Haven*, the follow up *Ancora* finds the fab Anglo-Irish four returning to flex musical muscles with a confidence and *élan* hard to resist. Taking its title from Michelangelo's 87th birthday declaration '*Ancora imparà*' ('I am yet learning') – *ancora* also translating as 'hope' or 'again' – it serves a vibrant reminder of just how good this crack quartet are.

The sense of ensemble is even stronger, more elastic and intricate than before. Brian Finnegan and Sarah Allen's twin flutes and whistles, Ed Boyd's guitar and the *bodhrán* of John Joe Kelly mesh together with the mathematical precision of poetry bolstered by bursts of drama. Adding idiosyncratic tones to the already rich palette of colours are Mark Tucker's theremin on the closing pairing of Zoë Conway's 'Ómós Sheamuis' and John McSherry's 'The Quickenbeam', Melvin Ifill's steel drums on 'The Coral Castle' and Matthias Loibner's evocative hurdy-gurdy on two tracks. Boyd and Tucker's production perfectly frames a veteran outfit doing what they do best.

MICHAEL QUINN

TRACK TO TRY *Ocean Child*

were paper-thin. Alas, those walls still stand. But so does the passion and the tenderness of his wonderful account of Burns' 'Now Westlin' Winds' or the pairing of 'Lough Erne' and 'First Kiss at Parting'.

TIM CUMMING

TRACK TO TRY *The World Turned Upside Down*

Gnoss
Drawn from Deep Water

Blackfly Records (43 mins)

★★★★★

Acoustic group deliver a cracking set of contemporary folk



live scene and *Drawn from Deep Water*

First formed as a duo in 2015, Gnoss (now a quartet) have been steadily making a name for themselves on the

is the culmination of some time taken to develop as a band, write, and record some favourite tunes.

The cover of David Francey's 'The Waking Hour' is delivered with a nice tone and a sweet voice by Aidan Moodie, while 'Sea Widow' makes effective use of the poetry of Orkney's George Mackay Brown. As a band, they are strongest in their instrumental pieces. 'Hasse A's' demonstrates some fiery fiddle work, while 'Voodoo' is a sweaty piece of whistle and flute. 'The Duchess' is a soft, atmospheric toe-tapper and Orkney fairy-tale 'The Peeriefool' is a sprightly little tune.

Sweeping melodies, accomplished musicianship and a fine ear for tunes characterise this album. Perhaps not distinctive enough to gather new audiences, it's a fine release nonetheless.

BILLY ROUGH

TRACK TO TRY *Hasse A's*

Nick Hart
Nick Hart Sings Nine English Folk Songs

Roebuck Records (40 mins)

★★★★★

Singing traditional tunes straight from the Hart



With a Ronseal matter-of-factness, this second album from Cambridgeshire folk singer Nick Hart does exactly what it says on the tin. He's a folk music purist who has trawled the recordings made by collectors throughout the 20th century not only for these songs, but more importantly, for the way they were performed. There's something of a bygone era to it all, especially in such innocent little japes as the implied rhyming of 'The Molecatcher' – 'while

this young chap's in the midst of his frolics, the molecatcher caught him right square by the shoulder.'

Hart's rough, unrefined voice sounds straight out of a field recording from some sawdust-strewn public house. It's almost a time capsule voice, evidence of many years poring over the archives. His liner notes emphasise that these songs would traditionally have been sung unaccompanied. As such, he is at pains to avoid muddying nuances of mode and meter with too much instrumentation.

His guitar style is spare and plucked. His whole delivery harks not only to the venerable old man of English folk, Martin Carthy, but also to the rough-hewn manner of another south-east English folk singer, Chris Wood. Tim Moore, who produced the album, brings a mournful viola to several tracks, while Dominic Hooper joins Hart with harmony vocals.

NATHANIEL HANDY

TRACK TO TRY *The Molecatcher*

Järventaus | Dluzewski
Jorden Svart

Nordic Notes (42 mins)

★★★★★

Dark, elegant Swedish folk



This is timeless Scandinavian simplicity itself: the dark-edged voice of Maria Järventaus set against the virtuosic strings of Gabbi Dluzewski. These songs are mostly sad but not depressing, brightened by Dluzewski's sparkling fingerwork on mandolin and Swedish *bouzouki*, also known as a Nordic *mandola* or octave mandolin. A veteran of the Swedish-Estonian string band Fränder, he's occasionally joined by brother and bandmate Daniel Dluzewski on double bass. Besides the odd multi-tracked vocal, there are no gimmicks here, or great innovations either.

Järventaus sings with a restrained, courtly elegance, underpinned by a melancholy Celtic tinge. She hails from the northern Swedish town of Kalix, near the Finnish border and the Torne Valley, where some of these songs originate, including the lullaby 'Tussiko Lussiko'. The closing ballad is the exception – a Swedish take on the old Appalachian lament 'The Blackest Crow', here as 'Svartaste Korpen'.

Järventaus wrote or arranged many of the other tunes, including the album's liveliest moments: the nearly-rock'n'roll 'Käre Far' (Dear Papa) and the seafaring 'Marken Vântar' (The

Earth is Waiting), which suggest Sandy Denny-era Fairport Convention in their jollier moments.

WLF STENGER

TRACK TO TRY *Marken Vântar*

Mary Ann Kennedy
Glaschu: Home Town Love Song

ARC Music (53 mins)

★★★★★

A tribute to the urban Gael's home city of Glasgow



Gaelic songstress Mary Ann Kennedy returns with 16 tracks inspired by her home town – and a real labour of love it is too. This urban Gael, brought up in the multicultural diaspora of Scotland's most vibrant city, Glasgow, has delivered a timeless, evocative, smoky epic to the city of her birth.

There is something slightly ethereal in its mix of spoken word, blues, bluegrass and Gaelic song. It feels very much part of the west coast (mainly Glasgow) folk scene of the early 1970s – and that's no bad thing. 'Óran don 'Clutha' (Song for the 'Clutha') is a case in point; it is a tribute to the Clyde but reminiscent of the sound of the Clutha Bar, a regular haunt of Billy Connolly in his Humblebums days.

Actors Bill Paterson and Wilma Kennedy provide spoken-word contributions on four of the tracks, including the odes to Glasgow's shopping thoroughfares 'Sauchiehall Street, Friday Morning' and 'Sràid Bhochanan (Buchanan Street)'. It's a beautifully produced album, rich in atmospheric arrangements accompanying the stunning voice of Kennedy, and a genuine and sincere expression of love for her home town.

BILLY ROUGH

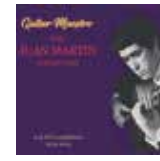
TRACK TO TRY *Óran do Ghlaschu*

Juan Martín
Guitar Maestro

Flamencovision (4 CDs, 295 mins)

★★★★★

Guitarist's career to date: all the flamenco you could possibly Juan



Known as much for his books on guitar playing as his virtuosity, Spanish maestro Juan Martín possesses quite a lineage. He studied flamenco under Niño Ricardo and Paco de Lucía, worked the club circuit, played for Picasso's 90th birthday celebrations and performed with Rory Gallagher



The Orbital Strangers Project

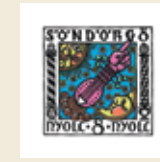
TOP OF THE WORLD TRACK 8

Söndörgö
Nyolc 8 Nyolc

SNORG Music (53 mins)

★★★★★

The band of brothers creating a new Hungarian tradition



Söndörgö are Hungary's super-lively *tambura* band, fizzing in their music and breathtaking to watch on stage. Members of the Eredics family play instrumental music from the Serbian and Croatian communities in Hungary

on plucked mandolin-like *tamburas*, and Macedonian tunes with wind, brass, accordion and percussion. This album is their eighth (*nyolc* in Hungarian).

Produced by Ben Mandelson, what's impressive here is the way Söndörgö create new music from their

traditional sources. 'Tines' features Dávid Eredics on *kaval* (flute), playing over asymmetric Bulgarian rhythms. 'Merakolo' is a mercurial dash of *kolo* dances with Salamon Eredics on shepherd's flute. Two of the tracks clock in at over ten minutes. 'Riba' begins with drums and brass, and suggests something ritualistic. In the middle it becomes delicate and melancholy, and then rushes to a virtuoso *tambura* finish. A couple of tunes on the album will be familiar to those that know their Bartók, taking melodies he used in the 44 *Duos for Violins* and the *Romanian Folk Dances*, the latter in 'Kind of Bela'. All in all, a very satisfying and accomplished set.

SIMON BROUGHTON

TRACK TO TRY *Merakolo*

and Miles Davis, recorded with Herbie Hancock and, ahem, had a UK top ten hit with 'Love Theme from The Thorn Birds'; an *hombre* has got to eat.

Recorded between 1974 and 2015, this box of fine music showcases a life dedicated to the *bulerias*, *soleá*, *sevillana* and other *palos* you could mention – and some you might not, such as the rarely used (outside dancing) *zapateado* and the 2/4 *garrotin*. Crisp, plain recordings mean the early material is for the purist, showing Martín forge his own style away from that of his early mentors.

The third CD is perhaps the odd one out, featuring crossover, classical-tinged work with the Royal Philharmonic and non-flamenco collaborations with keyboard player Todd Cochran and saxophonist Mark Isham. In all, 18 albums are dipped into over the four CDs. It's easy to be impressed by new takes and novel fusions, but this collection is solid

evidence of a long career defined by serious commitment to an instrument, gimmick-free and quite glorious in its way.

CHRIS MOSS

TRACK TO TRY *Taconeos*

Eduardo Niebla
Las Olas de Niebla

LMR Records (49 mins)

★★★★★

Chamber music flamenco from guitarist and composer



Virtuoso guitar player and composer Eduardo Niebla has a 40-year history of genre-crossing collaboration behind him and his latest offering is no different. *Las Olas de Niebla* sees Niebla's flamenco-infused guitar style interwoven with chamber music and ever deeper explorations into modern jazz.

Dedicated to his artist brother José, the album is intimately inspired by art, people and places dear to Niebla.

Niebla's playing is crisp and flawless throughout, demonstrating his considerable range and versatility. Although some of the raw immediacy of his earlier flamenco playing can be heard on the opening title-track, he has largely traded this for a smoother, more considered sound with rich chamber orchestrations and dense textures. While Niebla's lead guitar is to the fore for most of the album, some of the most beautiful moments surface in the composed interplay between violin, viola, cello and guitar on tracks such as 'Virginia Renshaw'. This vibrant, colourful and melodic journey is superbly recorded, demonstrating Niebla's self-taught lyrical guitar mastery, an accomplishment of genre-defying composition and musicianship.

DOUGLAS MACGREGOR

TRACK TO TRY *Virginia Renshaw* ▶



Tom Howard

TOP OF THE WORLD TRACK 9

Eliza Carthy
Restitute

Topic Records (46 mins)

★★★★★

Singer and fiddle player releases a solo album to help her band



In 2016, the Wayward Band, the ensemble of gifted musicians Eliza Carthy first assembled in 2013, suffered what she describes as a 'monumental con' and lost the funding for their ambitious *Big Machine* album. Carthy was moved to record *Restitute*, her first solo album for 14 years, in her bedroom and sell it to raise money to pay the band. It has now been released by Topic as part of the label's 80th birthday celebrations.

Restitute opens with 'Friendship' but, unsurprisingly, anger at injustice and corruption runs through it. She

curses capitalists with Leon Rosselson's 'The Man Who Puffs the Big Cigar', lampoons lawyers with her setting of Jonathan Swift's poem 'Helter Skelter' and sings 'Dream of Napoleon', one of a body of English traditional songs radically admiring of Bonaparte.

Carthy sings with absolute conviction, scraping a jagged accompaniment from her violin. But it isn't all furious: 'Lady All Skin and Bone' is a comedic contemplation of death, and the album closes with 'The Last Rose of Summer', expressing the necessity of friendship.

JULIAN MAY

TRACK TO TRY *The Slave's Lament*

Pauanne

Nordic Notes (47 mins)

★★★★★

The eccentric side of Finland



Pauanne are an eye- and ear-catching trio from Finland. They revel in the darker, pre-Christian

sounds of the folk tradition rather than the jovial or nostalgic, and they make apt contemporary metaphors. Their song 'Rauta' likens an ancient Finnish spell for a protective wall with beliefs in 21st century America, not because, I think, they support Trump's Mexican wall but because they like the way the same concerns reappear across the centuries. Pauanne was the name of the thunder god whose help was sought for the wall. Most of the tracks include archive recordings of music or songs seamlessly woven into the music of Kukka Lehto (violin, keyboards), Eero Pennanen (keyboards) and Janne Haavisto (drums and percussion).

'Siihen Laihin Eläny' (That's the Way I've Lived) is based on a 17th century witch trial for a poor woman just trying to survive, while the booklet quotes some extraordinarily sexist statements from different periods on the intellectual inferiority of women. 'Akkojen Hommia' (Womanish Work) samples a woman's cow herding song and apparently in the 17th century men were prohibited from being cowherds because they tended to have sex with the cows. Finland seems a much more eccentric place after listening to this album. Pauanne won the Newcomer award in this year's Ethnogala in Helsinki.

SIMON BROUGHTON

TRACK TO TRY *Akkojen Hommia*

Amy Thatcher Solo

Amy Thatcher (34 mins)

★★★★★

The accordion player strikes out on her own



Amy Thatcher is an acclaimed accordion player, well-known from her work with Northumbrian

piper Kathryn Tickell, The Monster Ceilidh Band and The Shee. It's somewhat surprising then that *Solo* is Amy Thatcher's first... er... solo album. There are ten tracks, all but one her own compositions. They are played solely on her Pignini Converter

accordion, apart from the final track 'Stomping Clogs (Remix)' – Thatcher's known for her deft clog dancing, too.

One musician, one instrument, but there's remarkable variety here. 'April's Child' is a tender piece written for a friend expecting her first child. 'Sleep's Spindles/Zakopane Christmas' is effervescent and 'The Laburnum Tree', a tune written in thanks to a happy home she has left, itself moves on so fast it captures the fluttering of leaves.

As striking as the melodies are the bass lines. Thatcher's accordion features the free bass system, which gives access to more notes than is standard and allows the player to create her own chords. Throughout Thatcher's left hand provides complex rhythms and sound textures that, far more than accompaniment, are integral to the depth of her compositions.

Thatcher recently became a mother and her album has an intimate, thoughtful quality, reflecting on a full and ever-changing life.

JULIAN MAY

TRACK TO TRY *April's Child*

The Ukrainians Summer in Lviv

Zirka Records (49 mins)

★★★★★

Ukrainians celebrate the Summer of Lviv



It's 30 years since the creation of The Ukrainians, a unique phenomenon of British-indie-rock-meets-Ukrainian-tradition. It began with guitarist Peter Solowka (who had the Ukrainian heritage) and The Wedding Present recording a session for BBC Radio's John Peel show. Their songs are electric-guitar-led rock songs, sung in Ukrainian with accordion to add an Eastern European twist. Their continued success in Ukraine and elsewhere in the region suggests a nostalgia for classic rock'n'roll.

The title-track is a celebration of one of the country's most beautiful cities, with distorted guitars and thrashing drums. 'Summer in Lviv will last forever,' they cry. 'Zvidky Vy?' is more satirical, about how everybody asks Ukrainian workers abroad 'where do you come from?'. 'Sterezhitsya Kozakivi' (Beware of the Kozaks) is alarmingly catchy. There isn't a song yet about a comedian who plays the president actually becoming the president, but you feel there could be.

SIMON BROUGHTON

TRACK TO TRY *Zvidky Vy?*



Accordion and joik duo Vildá

Joanna Suomalainen

Vildá Vildaluodda/Wildprint

Bafe's Factory (44 mins)

★★★★★

A daring pairing of Finnish joik and accordion



Hildá Länsman, a young vocalist from northern Finland's indigenous Sámi community, fuses traditional joik chant-singing with electronic pop in the duo Solju with her mother Ulla Pirttijärvi-Länsman. In her new duo Vildá, she teams up with accordionist-singer Viivi Maria Saarenkylä for a more ambitious, risk-taking mix of Sámi and Finnish folk with organic sounds from further afield, thanks to various guests. These range from calabash playing by Aruban drummer Christopher Rodulfo and classical violin from Bulgaria's Stilian Ravelaska to beatboxing by Venla Iлона Blom of vocal group Tuuletur.

Joik and accordion is a non-traditional pairing, yet it sounds natural as Länsman's spiralling vocals entwine like DNA strands with Saarenkylä's accordion arpeggios. The vocals can be harsh at times, as on 'Beana Ciellá' (The Dog Barks) and 'Mäkrävaaran Äijö' (The Old Man of Mäkrä Hill). The latter echoes Värttinä's 'Äijö' incantation, released when these musicians were just little kids.

The pair spin a wide array of sonic textures, atmospheres and emotions, from the elegiac accordion solo 'Winter Woods' to 'Utsjoki-Disko', a playful romp of youthful romance in the EU's northernmost municipality – a sparsely populated wilderness where you might seek some place dark to escape the bright midnight sun.

LUIF STENGER

TRACK TO TRY *Utsjoki-Disko*

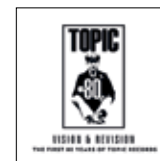
VARIOUS ARTISTS

Vision & Revision: The First 80 Years of Topic Records

Topic Records (2 CDs, 84 mins)

★★★★★

Folk stars of today reimagine the tunes that influenced them



Topic Records grew out of the Workers' Music Association and over eight decades has consistently

championed music made by working people. Almost all the stalwarts of the folk revival – June Tabor, Nic Jones, Martin Simpson – were nurtured (and still are) by Topic.

In celebration of its first 80 years Topic invited many of today's finest folk musicians to choose a song from the label's catalogue and reinterpret it. *Vision & Revision* is the result, 20 new tracks by senior figures including Richard Thompson, Peggy Seeger and the Oldham Tinkers, and younger ones, among them Sam Lee, Lisa Knapp, Emily Portman and Rob Harbron.

Their choices are revealing. Martin Simpson first saw the American singer Hedy West in a folk club in Scunthorpe and bought her album *Ballads*. His contribution, 'Beaulampkin', he learned from that record half a century ago. When he was 17, Martin Carthy heard Sam Larner, who was 80, singing and it shaped his life. Carthy, approaching Larner's age when he came across him, sings 'Napoleon's Dream'. Sam Lee, fascinated by Gypsy singing, radically interprets 'The Deserter' as sung by Wiggy Smith.

For anyone who knows these songs, there is a deeper experience, a musical echoing through time.

JULIAN MAY

TRACK TO TRY *The Bay of Biscay* by Emily Portman