

Europe REVIEWS

Bird in the Belly Neighbours and Sisters

Bird in the Belly (31 mins)

★★★★★

Bringing old characters to life



This is the strong follow-up to *The Crowing* from the Brighton quartet composed of alt-folk artist Jinnwoo, folk duo Hickory Signals (Laura Ward and Adam Ronchetti) and multi-instrumentalist Tom Pryor. Like that first album, *Neighbours and Sisters* pokes around the more obscure corners of English folk song, drawing primarily on Georgian and Victorian sources, and with lashings of city grime, crime and exploitation from both those periods. On the way, you'll encounter Sir Death, a monstrous workhouse rapist, the prostitutes of Yarmouth, the condemned of Newgate and a World War I soldier's yearning for home.

The album title comes from the refrain to 'Phoebe to Phyllis', a vigorous account of working girls turning to the streets in their husbands' absence, revelling in a favourite client and 'when our husbands come home and ask what we've done/to look at those cuckolds there will be some fun.' Ward and Ronchetti trade lead vocals and share harmonies, and the instrumental mix of Ward's flute, Ronchetti's *shruti* and the fiddle, guitars, organ and banjo Pryor handles make for a fresh and light touch, bringing these social songs from a long-ago era back to life.

TIM CUMMING

TRACK TO TRY *Phoebe to Phyllis*

Aurelie Dorzee & Tom Theuns ft Michel Massot Elixir

homerecords.be (54 mins)

★★★★★

Belgians experiment with ancient and modern sounds



There's a touch of Monty Python to the initial bars of 'Ouverture', the opening number of this sixth album for homerecords.be by Belgian folk violinist Dorzee and finger-picking guitarist Theuns (who both also contribute vocals). Any thoughts of funny walks are soon dispelled, however, as this short track segues into the title-song and becomes a more solemn, contemplative and at times funereal procession through a mysteriously exotic, medieval world.

The two artists (who played together previously as Aurelia) are joined on their musical journey by Michel Massot, here playing sousaphone and euphonium, among other things. Unique versions of stringed instruments such as the *psaltery*, *mandolaoto* and *viola d'amore* were fabricated especially for the project, which also employs the more traditional *sitar* and mandolin to create an effect that is at once both ancient and modern. Adding to the intriguing paradox, tracks such as 'Mon Arbre' and 'Indira's Blues' have a timbre that might be described as being oriental as well as Sephardic. A haunting air of enigmatic wandering and wistful longing pervades this album, leaving the patient and attentive listener with the sense of having been beguiled and bewitched for a very pleasant hour.

RUSSELL HIGHAM

TRACK TO TRY *La Parade des Fous*

Anon Egeland, Mats Edén & Mikael Marin Egeland Edén Marin Vol 1

Taragot (42 mins)

★★★★★

Scandinavia's finest folkies



It's hard to believe that three of Scandinavia's most outstanding folk musicians are together here as a trio for the first time. They've known each other for decades and each has made significant contributions to the music scene throughout Scandinavia and beyond. Some things are worth

the wait though. They are inspirational string players, composers, arrangers and teachers: Norway's Anon Egeland, and Mats Edén and Mikael Marin from Swedish bands Groupa and Väsen respectively. The knowledge, research and experience each brings makes this a must-have album, but, even more than that, they bring decades of passion, warmth and wit to unforgettable dance tunes, unearthed from manuscripts, inspired by great players of the past. Tunes reveal the delicious quiriness of different tunings, regional variations, and if you don't know your *springars* from your *reindlers* by the end of the album, just go back to track one!

Up on the same pedestal as these musicians is the album's producer Tellef Kvifte, a distinguished folk historian and musician. Making the most of the unique atmosphere of Rauland in Norway, a key location for Nordic folk musicians, Kvifte has also masterminded the rather brilliant CD notes, complete with tune notations and instrument tunings. Outstanding.

FIONA TALKINGTON

TRACK TO TRY *Halling Etter Olaf Frøysaa*

Ellinor & Leonor Årsringar

Kakafon Records (56 mins)

★★★★★

Swedish folk tunes from string duo that really grow on you



Ellinor & Leonor are a traditional music duo who met in Gothenburg, Sweden, and released their

debut album five years ago. Though Leonor Palazzo is a cellist from Belgium, it is to Ellinor Fritz's home province of Dalarna – the heartland of Sweden both geographically and spiritually – that they have turned for their music.

This second album is called *Årsringar*, meaning 'Growth Rings' in English, which not only roots their music in the pastoral setting of the Swedish countryside and forest, but also connotes the organic layering of influences that create a folk music tradition. On this album, they interpret tunes from 18th- and 19th-century collections as well as others they have learned from contemporary Swedish folk fiddlers.

There are *polskas*, *polonaises*, a lively *hagervals* and a wedding march. The tunes run from the reflective ('Uggelbovalsen') to the upbeat ('Schottis Efter August Medin 'Necken'). The compositions have a purity of sound achieved through the simple interplay of just two instruments – Fritz's fiddle and Palazzo's five-string cello. As the Carl Larsson-esque photograph on the album cover suggests, with its pared-back parlour scene, this is honest, unadorned Swedish dance music tapping into a long tradition.

NATHANIEL HANDY

TRACK TO TRY *Brudmarsch Från Enviken*

Lucilla Galeazzi, Didier Laloy, Ialma, Carlo Rizzo and Maarten Decombel Alegrìa e Libertà

homerecords.be (48 mins)

★★★★★

Connecting the traditions of Galicia and Salento



This feels like a convivial affair – a motley group of musicians coming together, jamming, finding they get along really quite well and then cutting a disc to capture the spirit of their meeting. The extrovert of the party is lead singer Lucilla Galeazzi, though for my money, it's Carlo Rizzo on the *tamburello* (a large Italian tambourine) who gives the most distinctive and memorable contribution (clearly I'd been underestimating the tambourine). They're ably accompanied by Galician vocal group Ialma and Belgians Didier Laloy and Maarten Decombel on accordion and guitar respectively.

The material explores the connections and contrasts between



Egeland, Edén and Marin