

hardship and love, at times performed with a cabaret-like playfulness, at others with deep sorrow. Throughout, the album feels full of intention, with a chamber-like quality that invites attentiveness and creates a depth that appears to grow with each listening. The musical space is thoughtfully balanced, with exquisite group dynamics as instruments weave and support each other, providing space and giving generously. Kalmering's vocals adapt equally well, from smoky storytelling to suggestive optimism, evocative and full of meaning.

CELESTE CANTOR-STEPHENS  
**TRACK TO TRY** *Friling*

**Benji Kirkpatrick & The Excess**  
**Gold Has Worn Away**  
 Westpark (57 mins)

★★★★★

*Ex-Bellowhead man cooks up some folk rock: Benjimi Hendrix?*



Benji Kirkpatrick is a founder member of big-band folk trailblazers

Bellowhead and a current member of Faustus, but he is also an unabashed fan of the classic power trio format, as exemplified by his love of the Jimi Hendrix Experience. He has been writing and cooking up plans for his own project over the last couple of years, even making a solo album with the self-explanatory title *Hendrix Songs*. Here, he takes on vocals, *bouzoukis*, guitars, mandolin, banjo and piano, aided and abetted by ex-Bellowhead percussionist Pete Flood and bass player extraordinaire Pete Thomas.

A collection of contemporary folk-rock songs rather than the aural assault threatened by their group name, *Gold Has Worn Away* is, now and again, a little more leaden than golden and 'A Classic Cut' should never have made the cut. But when it does work, it's robust and energetic. Lyrically, a song like 'Hiring Fair' about the plight of the working man might have come from almost any time, while 'Human Cost' and 'Valley of Green' address such tragically topical subjects as forced migration and looming environmental disaster. Later there's a shift to more personal lost love songs with 'Back to the Fold' and 'Fill My Heart', and even a slight return to his main man's 'Foxy Lady' with the instrumental 'Got to Be All Mine'.

KEVIN BOURKE  
**TRACK TO TRY** *Got to Be All Mine*



**Marja Mortensson & Daniel Herskedal**  
**Lååje – Dawn**  
 Vuelie (45 mins)

★★★★★

*Traditional joik for modern times*



Marja Mortensson – winner of a Spellemannprisen (the Norwegian Grammy Award) in 2018 – writes '*we could only ever become more knowledgeable about the past, whereas the future still remains unclear*': The

24-year-old South Sámi *joiker* grew up in the reindeer herding community of Svahken Sijte in Norway's Hedmark County. She holds her past close.

In collaboration with tuba and bass trumpet player and composer Daniel Herskedal, she has created an arresting statement of tradition and our connection with our natural environment that draws on the past to speak about the most urgent questions of our future on this

planet. On seven of the tracks, the duo are joined by the Trondheim Soloists String Quartet.

Joiking has a shape-shifting quality. The singer is said to take on the identity and voice of an animal or place. In this case, two songs joiked in 1911 by Kristina Johansson evoke 'Tjájhnie – The Woodpecker' and 'Riäksage – The Ptarmigan'. Elsewhere, Mortensson confronts ideas of progress and climate change in self-penned songs 'Gubpede Böötím – Where Did I Come From?' and 'Árrode Våårege – Be Cautious'. And all the while, in the shadows stands Frode Fjellheim, celebrated South Sámi musician, producer and founder of the Vuelie label.

NATHANIEL HANDY  
**TRACK TO TRY** *Gubpede Böötím – Where Did I Come From?*

**Anne-Mari Kivimäki & Palomyly**  
**Hämeen Lauuluja**  
 Nordic Notes (43 mins)

★★★★★

*Minimalist tunes that Finnish on a high note with a four-part suite*



This is the fourth release of this Finnish trio of multi-instrumentalists comprised of Anne-Mari Kivimäki on *notka* (accordion), vocals and stomp box, Ville Rauhala on double bass, vocals, guitar and percussion and Pekko Käppi on fiddle, vocals and bowed lyre. A mix of songs and instrumental tracks, this album goes from minimalist, dance-like tracks with catchy, revolving melodies to more haunting, wispy musical lines such as in the *Kehtolaulu Suite*.

Listeners will enjoy the eclectic approach to this album, with a pulsing, minimalist interplay throughout that's reminiscent of Steve Reich's music. There's also a beautiful poetry to the names of tracks, such as 'Surullinen Kirje' (Sad Letter) – you feel like you're slowly journeying through an emotive spectrum of thoughts and reflections throughout. The playing is subtle and nuanced, with Anne-Mari Kivimäki producing a warm, at times almost hypnotic tone in both her singing and accordion playing. There is equal sensitivity and expression in the string playing of Käppi and Rauhala. Sit back and let the sustained harmonic beauty of the four-part *Kehtolaulu Suite*, which finishes the album, wash over you. A stunning end to an album of surprises and introspection.

JAMES RORISTON  
**TRACK TO TRY** *Surullinen Kirje*

**Kreiz Breizh Akademi #7**  
**Hed**  
 Coop Breizh (58 mins)

★★★★★

*Breton collective get modal*



The seventh-born of the well-known Kreiz Breizh Akademi musical laboratory from Brittany, this collective is based on the famous tradition of *bagad* music (Breton pipe band music) and involves four *bombards*, four Scottish bagpipes, four drummers, a small brass section, a bass, a guitar and two Breton singers. Linking modal music (which is the main purpose of exploration of KBA) and Scottish bagpipes is risky, but KBA#7 do it well. If you're a bagpipe lover, or adventurous enough, then give it a listen. As part of the KBA ▶