

3 DAFT MONKEYS

Year Of The Clown 3DM11

Monkey business and beyond. 3 Daft Monkeys open up new channels on this wide statement of vision and intent. The undercurrents which tease and bob around mark their entry into the real world even if their music is still heavily laced with elements both carnival and surreal. Opener *Year Of The Clown* might come on like circus rock, in fact it's a cutting analysis on the state political: "who put the crown on the head of the clown?" they intone, only to come to the frightening realisation it was supposedly intelligent, thinking people. Yikes! Really? Yep and they aren't through by any means. Where the Levellers cried for the sanctity of the individual, Daft Monkeys are about collective responsibility; the sunny side of the street has shadows that grow ever longer, whilst our green and pleasant land comes up as increasingly uncomfortable. Why, at one point even the Almighty's so exasperated by his creation he goes out on a drunken bender.

Sharper writing and focus gives the finger-pointing all the more poignancy, whilst food for thought is delivered with the usual extravaganza and theatre. Particularly effective is *Look To The Stars* with its allusions to those seeking refuge, the strings lending a baroque tinge. *Blessings* has lyrics that could equally be about an argument between friends or an observation on the divide between politicians and the everyday lives of those they claim to represent, Athene Roberts summoning a reel to fill around the frantic, acoustic punk rhythms. *Not In My Name* is fast, punchy and straight to the point, "not in my name will you play your deadly game/you arm the killers at the gate, you pay them with your guilty currency that is hate." *We Are Revolution* throws reggae into the rhythmic mix, Rich Mulryne and Jamie Graham handling the drop beats straight from Jamaica, lyrics looking to a brighter tomorrow (maybe), a revolution of creation not destruction and desperation. "We're the children of this world And we are revolution."

Think you know 3 Daft Monkeys? Think again. *Year Of The Clown* sounds familiar but is whole new chapter.

www.3daftmonkeys.co.uk

Simon Jones

ROMANE WITH STOCHELO ROSENBERG

Gypsy Guitar Masters Vol 11 Frémeaux & Associés FA549

In a world that feels full to bursting with video, it is still rare to find clips of exceptional musicians playing live, having fun, and spontaneously creating beautiful and extraordinary music. But this is just one part of what's on offer.

The package contains a CD and DVD recorded live at the L'Opéra Comédie de Montpellier. Romane is a giant of the Gypsy jazz guitar, and Frémeaux & Associés have committed to putting out a complete set of his recordings, of which this is the eleventh volume. Here he is paired with Stochelo Rosenberg, equally a legend within this genre.

This is not a combative shouting match as so many of these star pairings are, but a conversation between two extraordinarily gifted equals, with a little help from Marc-Michel Le Brevillon on bass.

You have eleven tracks on the CD plus a bonus track of Stochelo's composition *Double Jeu* (from the album *Duo À La Cigale*); a DVD which has six tracks, including four not featured on the CD, making fifteen. Then if that wasn't enough the DVD has a documentary

on them both, beautifully filmed by Sophie Paviot, plus a six-minute conversation where they discuss the history of the remarkable guitars they play. These latter two are in French, but don't worry, there's lots of music.

There isn't enough to space to tell you all the good things here, but if you like Gypsy jazz, it's worth it for the six tracks on the video alone. www.freameaux.com

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Jon Moore

GREG RUSSELL

Inclined To Be Red Fellside FECD281

It had to come sooner or later – a solo record from Greg. It can be seen as naturally complementing both his ongoing duo work with Ciaran Algar (whose own solo album *The Final Waltz* appeared not all that long ago) and an impressive tally of other musical activities over the past couple of years (including the revival of folk-opera *The Transports* and membership of Nancy Kerr's Sweet Visitor Band).

The extent of Greg's talent is impossible to ignore – he's a strong and confident singer and interpreter, a proficient instrumentalist (guitar, five-string banjo) and a thoughtful and increasingly assured songwriter. The latter strand is responsible for no fewer than four of the album's twelve songs, with topics ranging from E.G.A. (referring to Elizabeth Garrett Anderson – as written for the recent *Shake The Chains* project), and being a professional musician (*Travelling Onwards*), to humanity's adverse effect on the environment (*Race To Burn*). *Storylines* was written in response to a difference of opinion over the notion of English song. Other tracks find Greg gravitating towards songs that have been informed by life experience (Si Kahn's anthem of empowerment *What You Do With What You've Got*, for instance), or an interest in history (the Mick Ryan/Graham Moore classic *Road To Dorchester*), while Greg also tackles traditional songs from both sides of the Atlantic including *Joe Bowers* and an adaptation of the Child ballad *Bold Knight*. He also reveals his delight in unaccompanied singing through an a cappella rendition of Keith Marsden's perceptive song of class distinction *Willy-Ole Lad*.

Greg's distinctive singing is firmly at the centre of the picture here, compelling in its rough-hewn passion, while his guitar or banjo accompaniment proves all that's needed in a majority of cases, although he benefits further from selective augmentation

Greg Russell



courtesy of Archie Churchill-Moss (diatonic accordeon) and Tim Yates (double bass).

Inclined To Be Red is a well-considered solo debut from a performer who, although still barely in his mid-20s, yet with three duo albums with Ciaran already under his belt, has now well established his own forceful and convincingly individual musical personality.

www.gregrussellfolk.co.uk

David Kidman

SAM GLEAVES & TYLER HUGHES

Sam Gleaves & Tyler Hughes Community Music CMCD211

Hailing from southwestern Virginia, Sam Gleaves and Tyler Hughes sing in traditional duet style like a Hazel & Alice for our times. Their clear tenor voices blend beautifully, both with each other and with their empathetic banjo, guitar and fiddle playing. Produced (like Gleaves' 2015 solo debut *Ain't We Brothers*) with unadorned simplicity by Cathy Fink, this record partly honours the regional and personal influence of Appalachian women songwriters and musicians like Maybelle and Janette Carter, Ola Belle Reed and Kate Peters Sturgill.

Their renditions of *Bread And Roses* (the women's union anthem and James Oppenheim poem set to music by Mimi Fariña), Ola Belle Reed's *Tear Down The Fences* and Tom T Hall's *I Washed My Face In The Morning Dew* are both heartfelt and deeply emotive, whilst their instrumental chops are showcased on great old tunes like *Georgia Row*.

Gleaves and Hughes's work is both an expression of pride in their Appalachian roots and a shared revelation of a gentler, more inclusive rural America than the one frequently portrayed in the current political narrative. This theme is made most explicit in Tyler's *When We Love* ("when we love, we will make America great again...") but this is a subtle and engagingly honest record that challenges preconceptions through its makers' integrity, rather than by sloganeering.

Whilst both Gleaves and Hughes (the latter is also a square dance caller and a prize-winning flatfoot dancer) represent their regional musical culture in a wholly authentic style, theirs is a pluralist, rather than purist tradition. Welcome to Appalachia, folks. No one is a stranger here.

tylersammusic.com

Steve Hunt