

CD Review

'Hunter' by Christina Alden & Alex Patterson

Reviewed by Sandra Lawes

Christina Alden and Alex Patterson are songwriters and multi-instrumentalists from Norwich. They have been playing and singing together for the last seven years and have toured extensively in the UK and Europe – including an extended tour with Show of Hands, a show at Glasgow Royal Concert Hall for Celtic Connections and main stage performances at some of the UK's most prestigious folk festivals. Veterans of the recording studio, they have also released three albums as a trio with Noel Dashwood.

As it did for so many musicians, Covid 19 wreaked havoc on their touring schedule – taking away their income and even threatening their very identity. But Christina and Alex are not the sort of people to stand idly by, bemoaning their fate. They decided to do something positive, harness their creativity and set up a crowd funding campaign to create their debut duo album. They wrote and arranged ten new songs, rediscovering old instruments that they had not played for a long time and bringing sketchy ideas in old notebooks to life. They had to observe pandemic guidelines but luckily lockdowns meant that the normally busy streets in central Norwich were quiet and they were able to record everything in their home.

The result is a delightful collection of inspiring tracks – showcasing the exquisite harmonies achieved by blending the bell-like clarity of Christina's voice and Alex's deeper tones. Alex displays his virtuoso violin skills and Christina accompanies the lyrics with guitar and banjo. Alex also turns his hand to a variety of instruments including viola, cello, tenor guitar and shruti box. On some of the tracks they are joined by Calum McKemmie on double bass. Alex produced the whole album.

Many of the songs are inspired by nature - a wolf and a bear forming an unusual and magical bond, an Arctic fox that travelled 2000 miles in 76 days, the Greenland shark and conservation work in East Anglia. Others deal with issues so relevant to our modern world – migration, displacement, surviving against all odds, love and loss.

The album is beautifully presented with its rustic style card cover hand printed by the artists themselves complemented by a very informative booklet in the same style giving the back stories to the songs.

Christina and Alex are on tour throughout December 2021 and January 2022 – you can find details on their website <https://christinaaldenandalexpatterson.com/> where you can also buy the album and other items. You can also hear some of the tracks – a sort of 'try before you buy'. They also have a Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/christinaaldenandalexpatterson>

But if you want to see them perform, book tickets now as they have just announced that they are expecting a baby and will be taking a break from touring from the end of January to

await the arrival of their 'new tiny band member', due at the end of February.
Congratulations on behalf of Unicorn Folk!

CHRISTINA ALDEN & ALEX PATTERSON



HUNTER