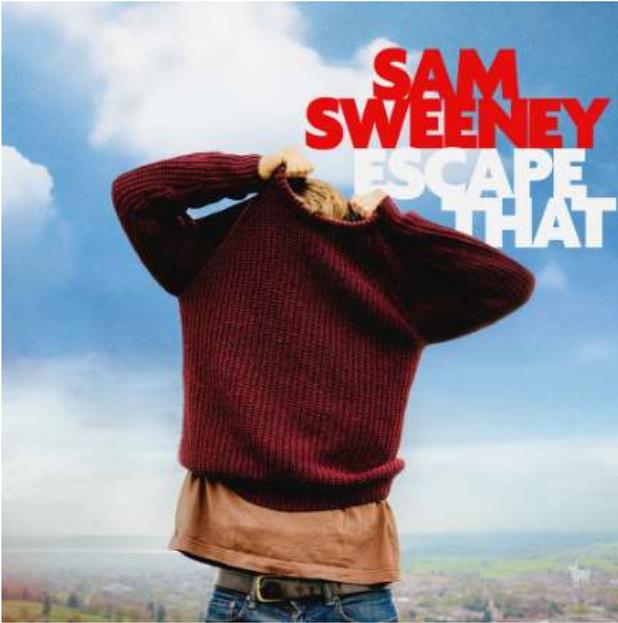


'Escape That' by Sam Sweeney

Reviewed by Carl Filby



Sam Sweeney is well-known as a talented fiddler who has a track record of performing and recording with many of the biggest names on the folk scene, perhaps most notably Bellowhead, as well as having a host of other musical credits to his name.

For this album he has brought together Ben Nicholls (Seth Lakeman, Nadine Shah) on electric and double bass, Jack Rutter on acoustic guitar, Louis Campbell on electric guitars and Dave Mackay (Art Garfunkel, Plini) on keyboards and synthesisers. The album was released on 21st October 2022 on CD and is due out on vinyl on 11th November.

The press material tells us that Sam retreated to his attic during the lockdowns of 2020-21 and initially composed the music using synthesisers and guitars. He then developed the music as dance tunes before translating the melodies back to the fiddle.

I listened to this album a couple of times and enjoyed the music at a certain level but realised that perhaps I wasn't the best person to review this work as I am not a huge fan of instrumental albums. The press material talks about the album as being a "heady mix that bursts pasts the folk gatekeepers" which is perhaps a bit unfair as I don't think there are too many of those around these days. For me, it is simply that there always comes a point after a while where I miss, almost crave, the sound of a human voice. Perhaps that is why, although appreciating the beauty of certain pieces of 'classical' music and how the use of classical stringed instruments can enhance many types of music, I have always struggled to fully get into classical music by the great composers.

So, why do I appear to have changed my mind about doing a review, such as it is? First and foremost because I recognise that this is something different and certainly innovative in its approach and whilst I might not be able to appreciate it as much as I would like I am sure that other people will. The second reason is that you can judge for yourselves by going to see Sam supporting Bellowhead on their upcoming UK tour which starts on 10 November 2022.

At the time of writing there didn't appear to be anything under 'Gigs' on Sam's website <https://www.samsweeneymusic.com/> about the tour but you can find all the dates on the Bellowhead website here: <https://bellowhead.co.uk/live>