

'Undertow' by The Magpies

Reviewed by Carl Filby



The Magpies have been gaining a growing reputation since their debut album 'Tidings' was released in 2020 and 'Undertow' is their follow up which was released on 14th October, 2022.

As you can see from the promotional picture their music can be described as 'Transatlantic Folk' which is a fair description though some might describe it as 'Americana'. What's the difference? You tell me! Something to do with 'roots' perhaps but personally I don't like sticking labels on music. It does sometimes help to get a broad idea of what to expect though can be equally misleading for those unfamiliar with particular genres.

So, let's forget the labels and focus on the music!

A change in personnel has left the group comprising of Bella Gaffney, Holly Brandon and

the latest arrival Kate Griffin. Bella plays mainly guitar and double bass and occasional banjo whilst Kate plays mainly banjo with the occasional guitar. Holly is focused on the violin and has written the two instrumentals on the album, whilst Bella and Kate contribute their own songs and collectively, they are all credited with the 'traditional' arrangements. All three contribute to their very distinctive harmonies which run through the album and establish their unique sound.

On first play I must admit that I was beguiled by the overall sound into thinking that some of the songs sounded a bit similar but I think that was because the sound was distinctive and different from anything else I have heard recently. So, I was glad that I played it again and began to appreciate the subtle differences which become more pronounced with each play and as one becomes more familiar with each track.

The most obviously appealing tracks on first plays are perhaps 'Now & Then', 'Pass Me By' and 'Fall On My Knees', but this is an album where your own favourite may take a while to decide. I also enjoyed the instrumentals and, as a past fan of the Eurythmics, 'Sweet Dreams', which, given the band's feminist credentials, I assume is a kind of (well-deserved) tribute to Annie Lennox as well as being an interesting and fun conclusion to a fine album.

A tour to accompany the release of the album is already underway and I recommend that you check out their website <https://www.themagpiesmusic.com/> which has all the details and more about the group.