

'Almost A Sunset' by Kathryn Roberts & Sean Lakeman



Reviewed by Carl Filby

I was lucky enough to attend a concert featuring Kathryn and Sean around 5-6 years ago when 'Tomorrow Will Follow Today' was their latest album and featured heavily amongst the songs that night. I bought the CD of course and where many such purchases have languished on the shelf, that one has been dusted down and played quite a few times since.

The reason for that is also apparent in this new album by Kathryn and Sean, twice past winners of the Best Duo BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards, who have been playing together in one form or another for 30 years now and their musical understanding shines through this latest offering.

The CD comes in a traditional case with an informative booklet insert providing the image on the front cover. All the lyrics are provided which befits the emphasis on storytelling, along with credits, mainly to other Lakeman family members including both twin daughters.

This is their sixth album overall but the enchanting and intriguing quality that characterised 'Tomorrow Will Follow Today' is still there in 'Almost A Sunset'. It is full of human stories which capture the imagination and, at least in my case, make you want to look up the story of Sarah Winchester, for example.

The album is a mixture of predominantly Roberts/Lakeman compositions supplemented with a few traditional songs. It is one of those albums where it is difficult to pick out favourites simply because repeat listening reveals greater depth in each song and I can imagine that my favourites on this album will change over time. For what it's worth, I started off particularly liking the two-part 'Red Rose and White Lily', probably because I do have a strong liking for traditional folk. 'Ropedancer' was another that stood out initially, but although it seems like something of a cop out for a review, the honest truth is that I like all the songs on the album.

The key thing about the self-penned songs is that they tell a story which, as indicated in the interview elsewhere on Unicorn Folk, often starts with Kathryn's voracious reading habits and the lyrics arising from them. As Kathryn says, a good story generally makes a good song. Once you have added Kathryn's very distinctive voice to the fine guitar work provided by Sean (who is responsible for the mixing and production), and the varied and imaginative musical arrangements, you have an impressive album that will provide pleasure now and for some time to come.

The official release date for the album, which can be pre-ordered, is Friday 17th March, followed the next night by the start of an extensive tour into the beginning of May. Unfortunately, none of the dates are near to me but you may be luckier to catch them and you can find venue and ticketing details via the duo's website and other social media.

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