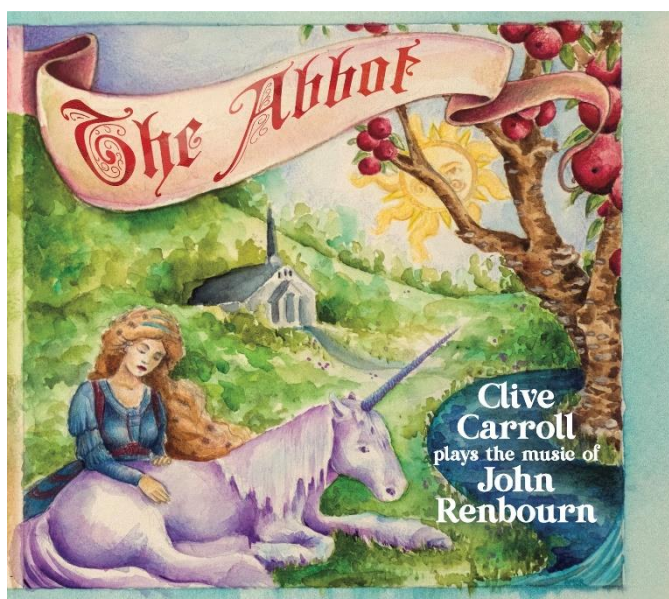


'The Abbot' – Clive Carroll plays the music of John Renbourn

Reviewed by Carl Filby (Nov 2023)



Clive Carroll has been hailed by no less an authority than Total Guitar Magazine as “...arguably the most accomplished finger stylist in the world today...”. He obtained a 1st Class Honours Degree in Composition and Guitar from the Trinity College of Music in London, penning orchestral works and an album’s worth of solo acoustic guitar music along the way. He has worked with several great guitar players including John Williams and Tommy Emmanuel and has toured across Australia, the Middle East, North America and Europe, the last two with John Renbourn.

Clive has released four solo albums prior to the release of **The Abbot** named after Renbourn’s nickname which was acquired during a tour with Clive and presumably heavily featured the beer of the same name. I must admit to a liking of Abbot Ale and also of John Renbourn’s work, though predominantly his folk output with **Pentangle** and albums such as **A Maid In Bedlam**.

The attractively packaged and informative 2-disk CD set contains the explanation of how Clive met John Renbourn at the Red Lion pub in Manningtree, Essex and then went on tour with him during which they discovered they had similar musical interests.

To summarise the story which you can read for yourself on the album cover and also on Clive’s website, Clive sat down in 2020 to revisit John Renbourn’s music and reflect on the gigs that they played together. This inspired him to spend the next two years or so putting together this album which contains his own interpretation of Renbourn’s work which he says that he approached in the same spirit that made John constantly tinker with and rework his own compositions.

The result is an album that contains music that Carroll and Renbourn performed together and also a number of original Renbourn numbers that have not been heard in live performance for some time. I’m a ‘folkie’ and not much of a ‘blues’ fan so I gravitate more naturally towards those more traditional folk melodies but I also enjoy the virtuosity of individual instruments that is displayed alongside Clive’s own virtuoso guitar. For example, the clarinets and flute on *O Death* and *The Pelican* which I think are both enhanced by their addition and of course I enjoy the classics such as *The Lady and The Unicorn* and *Lady Nothynges Toye Puffe*. However, I also found that I was enjoying much of the ‘blues’ tracks in between no doubt helped by the arrangements for the guitar.

In short, this is an interesting album which has much for anyone who is a fan of John Renbourn’s music, whichever ‘category’ it might be placed in, and is also a worthy tribute to the man himself by a very fine musician in his own right. The credits on the album show that he was supported by an extensive supporting cast of very accomplished musicians on a range of instruments.

I plan to play a track or two from **The Abbot** on ‘**Filby’s Folk**’ at 7pm on Royston Radio on Sunday 3rd December ([podcasts](#) are usually available from the day following broadcast) but I regret that I have not had time to write this review a little earlier which means that Clive has completed much of his current tour of the UK and Ireland though there are still a few dates left which you can find details of on his website: <http://www.clivecarroll.co.uk/concerts.html>