

'Roots 2' by Show of Hands

Reviewed by Carl Filby (Nov 2023)

For those of you have only just taken an interest in folk music or have been locked in a cellar for the



last 30 years or so, **Show of Hands** started out as a duo comprising singer-songwriter **Steve Knightley** and multi-instrumentalist **Phil Beer**. Steve is renowned for his song-writing and Phil has been an in-demand session musician for many years whilst also being a member of the Albion Band and touring with his own Phil Beer band. Singer and double-bassist **Miranda Sykes** was a member of Phil's band and since 2004 has been the 'unofficial' third member of SoH performing regularly with Steve and Phil.

Most of the songs on this double album come from Show of Hands' last four studio albums -

Arrogance Ignorance and Greed (2009), **Wake the Union** (2014), **Long Way Home** (2016) & **Battlefield Dance Floor** (2018). Added to that are a number of live sessions including Columbus and Recuerdos (Maria) recorded at Exeter Cathedral and Eggbeer Farm in collaboration with Madrid based roots band **Track Dogs**. Others such as Country Life and Sea Glass were recorded at the Northcott Theatre in Exeter and The Lily and the Rose was also recorded at Exeter Cathedral.

There is a comprehensive and very informative 28-page booklet accompanying this CD providing full musician and production credits for all the tracks, plus notes on the four studio albums referred to above, and I love such attention to detail. It was a surprise for me to read that despite its critical acclaim and chart success, *Arrogance Ignorance and Greed* (AIG) faced mixed reactions from the duo's fan base, some apparently being alienated by the album's departure from their traditional folk style. Personally, I came to Show of Hands rather late (though not after being locked in a cellar) and at the time that AIG was released, so was therefore unencumbered by expectations. I think that's a brilliant album but traditional fans are well-served by the selection of music available on this double album and there is plenty for fans of every musical disposition within the broad framework of the Show of Hands' sound.

Other fans will have different views on what should be on this album and whilst I might have included every track from AIG I have to concede that this is a more representative balance that most fans, old and new, will be delighted with. In addition to the AIG tracks, I am particularly enjoying *Country Life*, *Recuerdos (Maria)*, *First We Take Manhattan* and *Forfarshire* and Miranda's voice complements Steve's so perfectly that it is easy to see why the trio line-up has become so popular. However, it seems invidious to pick out individual tracks from such a well-selected collection of music that amply portrays the individual talents of each musician and the collective strength of the 'Show of Hands' sound. It's a great collection of music that I would recommend to anybody and a fitting tribute to keep fans as happy as might be expected with the news that Steve and Phil have called time on touring and announced "an indefinite break".

You can listen to several of the tracks in '[Filby's Folk](#)' at 7pm on Royston Radio on Sundays 12th & 19th November then subsequently in Show 26 & 27 [podcasts](#) usually available from the day following broadcast. Quite a few of the [Show of Hands Tour Dates](#) for Part 1 of their Full Circle tour with Miranda Sykes during **November** and early **December** are already sold out, though there are still some available. There is more chance of seeing them in **early 2024** when they tour as a duo though I recommend buying tickets **A.S.A.P. Enjoy them whilst you can!**