

'Sooner After Solstice' by A Winter Union

Reviewed by Carl Filby (Dec 2023)



A Winter Union has been described as a sort of folk supergroup that come together for the festive season, comprising: Jade Rhiannon on Vocals & Shruti Box; Katriona Gilmore on Vocals, Mandolin & Fiddle; Jamie Roberts on Vocals & Guitar; Hannah Sanders on Vocals, Dulcimer & Guitar, and Ben Savage on Vocals, Dobro, Guitar & Lapsteel.

I saw Hannah and Ben earlier this year when they provided excellent supported to Fairport Convention throughout their 2023 Wintour. Katriona & Jamie are also a very well-known duo on the folk scene whom I haven't had the fortune to catch yet and I have heard Jade sing at least twice with The Willows and have their excellent album *Amidst Fiery Skies*.

Sooner After Solstice is another excellent album in many ways. I don't normally review albums sent to Unicorn Folk in digital form as I prefer to review the whole package but I made an exception for this partly because I had been a bit tardy in responding owing to other commitments, but also because of the quality of the album. I was delighted to include tracks for my Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve shows ([Filby's Folk](#)) on Royston Radio (6pm in case you were wondering!) despite having plenty of other material to choose from!

The album is aptly subtitled 'A Transatlantic Folk Christmas' because it embraces both the UK and American folk traditions. Old folk fogie that I am, I tend to favour the UK songs over those with an American influence but the addition of the latter undoubtedly adds to the charm of the album and will enhance its appeal amongst many listeners.

For myself, I was completely bowled over by *Minstrels* the band's setting of Wordsworth's poem of the same name and *I Saw Three Ships* which, as Jade describes it, "... is a sparse brooding arrangement of this well-loved carol" with an original instrumental on the fiddle by Katriona called 'The Finchingfield Festive Rabbit', weaved in to enhance the effect and provide the earworm to remember.

There are other plenty of other outstanding tracks on this festive album which, irrespective of its seasonal nature is a wonderful listen and I only wish that I had managed to do so earlier. I'm afraid that you will have to wait to see A Winter Union now until next year, though I tried for Cambridge and tickets were sold out anyway! However, the album would still make an excellent Christmas present for this year or any other! <https://awinterunion.com/>.