

'A Sudden Rain' by John Meed and Friends

Reviewed by Carl Filby (March 2024)



John Meed is a well-known singer and songwriter in what is now his local Cambridge area. He grew up in the North-West of England and also lived in Leeds, and it would be fair to say that his song writing has been influenced by his travels perhaps most heavily by periods in France and Spain. As well as playing guitar, piano and keyboards, John provides all the main vocals on this, his eighth album and the first since 'Never Enough' in pre-Covid 2018. He is joined on most tracks by Lucinda Fudge on viola, who also contributes backing vocals on three tracks, and Matt Kelly on violin, viola and mandolin. Rhys Wilson provides guitars and keyboards on two tracks and also assists with the recording and production of the album.

The album is nicely presented in a twin-fold sleeve and most importantly comes with an informative booklet containing all the lyrics to John's cleverly crafted songs. John has been compared to Al Stewart and Leonard Cohen amongst others and from my knowledge of other songs in his repertoire, and the evidence of this album, I am not about to disagree.

As John explains in the introduction to the album and the accompanying notes, four of the songs were directly inspired by time spent in Nepal in 2019. They are observations on life in Nepal and in general, and in the case of *Real Life* they draw a contrast between people in different cultures and question which is more authentic.

John's songs are often imbued with and no doubt inspired by his political views which often favour the underdog and champion causes or highlight periods of history which may be in danger of being forgotten. *Le boulevard de Strasbourg* eloquently explains that migrants rarely leave their home through choice and *Progress* describes how that word is very much a double-edged sword and wonders where our materialistic and climate damaging lifestyles may ultimately lead. As with some of John's earlier songs *Thessalonika* reminds us of mid-20th Century horrors in a European setting which we would do well not to forget for fear of history repeating itself.

As John generously acknowledges in the sleeve notes the music is both underpinned and lifted into life by the beautiful string arrangements provided by Lucinda Fudge and Matt Kelly. I was a big fan of their combined contribution to Thursday's Band before Lucinda left and indeed it is a joy to hear them playing together again along with Lucinda's vocals.

After all that do I have to spell it out that I like this lovely album? It has the feel of a long letter written by a friend about his adventures and subsequent thoughts since you last saw him. If you can't get to the album launch at Cambridge Folk club on 22nd March do try and catch John and his friends when you get the chance and do give the album a listen on Bandcamp. You should be able to find more information [HERE](#) on John's website.