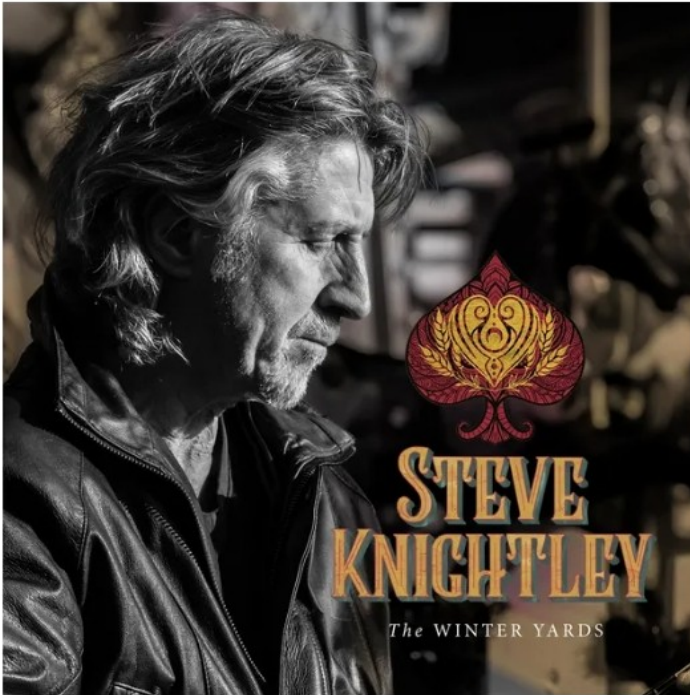


'Transactions' by Steve Knightley

Reviewed by Carl Filby (November 2024)



Steve Knightley is widely acknowledged in the folk world and beyond as one of the greatest songwriters of his generation so when he brings out his first solo album for 17 years it IS a significant event!

The Winter Yards was released in October 2024 to accompany the UK-wide tour undertaken to promote the album and it features some other notable musicians including Phil Beer and Phillip Henry (Edgelarks) and Track Dogs, plus long-term collaborator Matt Clifford on keyboards and Johnny Kalsi on dhol drum and tabla, with duo True Foxes and Devon Choir The Lost Sound providing vocals. There is also a collaboration with Ross Wilson of Blue Rose Code where he duets with Knightley on **Remember This Kiss**.

The song that immediately grabs attention is the opening **Transactions** which touches on three issues which are relevant to the present day UK, being the subject of immigration; the gender and identity issues that face young people and the Post Office scandal. The first two are contentious issues of course whilst the Post Office scandal is one that surely provokes universal sympathy for the victims i.e. the postmasters and postmistresses whose lives have been ruined and let's face it, for most of them, no amount of compensation is going to repair the hole in their lives – those that are still alive to receive it of course! The immigration issue is treated with particular sensitivity and I think adds a number of additional strands to the argument for those with an open mind.

I'm well aware however, as will be other fans, how Knightley's songs gradually creep into one's consciousness, so whilst the opening track is immediately compelling and surely a future 'classic' it may well not end up as my favourite on the album. Some songs included on the album are already well-known and liked such as **Maria (Recuerdos)** and **Exile** but there are other gems that I am already growing to like very much.

I first heard **The Ride** on last year's Show of Hands tour of Roots2 and it explores another aspect of 'Country Life' that Knightley has illustrated so well in his songs over the years. There is variety of songs for all tastes on this album which means that some songs will appeal to some people more than others. In my case there are two others, in addition to those already mentioned, that are already beginning to sound like stand-out additions to the catalogue. The first is **I Tried** and not just because it was conceived in Bath where I went to University. The song conveys a message, of missed opportunities and perhaps implicitly that it's not healthy to live life in the past. The other track that stands out is **Red Handed** which, as Steve's own thoughts on the tracks says is " a dark exploration of love's more obsessive side."

The CD version of the album comes in the traditional folded two-piece card style with, most importantly, a comprehensive 12-page booklet with all the lyrics, plus musician's credits for each track and even Steve's explanation of the making of each song or the selection of it for the album.

Steve is currently on tour throughout October and November so there are plenty of opportunities to catch his solo tour if you can get a ticket that is! You can find information about the tour in the 'Gigs & Tours' Listing on this website of course and more information about the artist can be found on Steve's own website: <https://steveknightley.com/home>

You can listen to tracks from the album on my **Filby's Folk** show the podcasts for which can be found [HERE](#) on this website usually a couple of weeks after broadcast. The first tracks were played on 27th October (Show 71) and the last for this first airing on Show 73.
