

# 'Dustbirds' by Dustbirds

Reviewed by Carl Filby (Sept 2025)

I quite often receive CDs through the post from artists that I have never heard of and I try and review them if I can say something positive, though sometimes I have other commitments and I can't always find time to do a review even though I would like to.

One such CD came from a band called Dustbirds and as this is their first album they sensibly called it after themselves. Although, I played a few tracks on 'Filby's Folk' I have been snowed under with work for Royston Arts Festival and unable to review it until now – though I am still 'snowed under'! However, I was impressed by this debut album and determined to make time for the review so, after a few weeks delay, here it is.



Dustbirds are a folk duo formed by Kerry Robinson, a Northumbrian Fiddle player, and guitarist Nick Robertson who are based in South Shropshire an area of the country that I know quite well from my late Mum living in Church Stretton for 14 years until 2021. The area that they live in clearly plays an important role in their music and they describe it best themselves when they say that "Together they craft their songs to the rhythm of their surroundings in the Shropshire hills, playful and plaintive in equal measure, with themes ranging from Arthurian legend to tales of ghostly happenings in the Stiperstones." You probably have to spend a bit of time in that part of the world to fully understand that sentiment.

They acknowledge the influence of both English and American folk amongst a range of influences and I think that is a good description of the music which has quite a traditional but almost transatlantic feel. I'm not a great fan of country music but this has just the right amount to give the music an interesting spin and a unique quality that in my view lifts it above the ordinary whilst leaving it firmly rooted in the folk tradition a view which might give the band themselves mixed feelings. Read on and I'll try to explain that thought.

The opening track of the album is 'Folk Band' whose theme, quoting the band again " ... is expressed succinctly in its single lyric - 'He never wanted to be in a Folk Band. All his electric guitars gathering dust on the wall...' " That's about it as far as any biographical notes go but it does suggest that at least Nick has been in a band at some stage and the playing of both performers suggests that they have been quite heavily involved in music at some stage in the past beyond this latest incarnation.

I was really taken with this album and playing it now whilst writing this review after a gap of a few weeks reminds me how much I enjoy the way that Nick's guitar and banjo playing provide what I think is the perfect foil to Kerry's fiddle, whose style of playing I particularly like, with the occasional shruti in the background. They are both good singers in their own right with distinctive voices and share the lead vocals on the album whilst also coming together very effectively when harmonies are required.

All the tracks on the album are written by Dustbirds themselves and I think I detect a few autobiographical references in there along with the obvious aforementioned one and listening just now I realise that I like all the tracks on the album and can't easily pick out a favourite.

So, I am not going to pick out a favourite but rather recommend that you head for Dustbird's [website](#) where you will find details of how to listen to and more importantly how to purchase the album. There are also details of the band's gigs but I fear that there is a lack of folk clubs in South Shropshire which even included Shrewsbury when I was last there in 2023. However, I think Dustbirds' music would go down well in a range of pubs and clubs and similar venues and I urge anyone looking out for performers to give their music a listen. They are also, in my opinion, well worth a support spot for one of the better known folk acts. Finally, Shrewsbury Folk Festival please take note of this talent on your doorstep!

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