

Acoustica - WELCOME TO ACOUSTICA (Organic Soup Records)



Good-looking, good-sounding Newcastle-based duo Andy and Cath Higgins have been performing around the north-east region for almost a decade, only becoming known as Acoustica since their return in 2003 from a self-enforced family-raising break.

For *Welcome To...*, Acoustica have chosen to showcase ten self-penned songs (although I'm told that live they mix these with quite a few covers).

On this evidence, a blind-tasting of a hitherto unfamiliar act as it were, I'm tempted to say that this was a wise decision, for this CD presents an attractive set of jointly-composed songs that are couched in a pleasingly rootsy folk vein, covering their chosen subject-matter with a well-judged lightness of touch.

Vocals are shared out roughly equally, and between them Andy and Cath can be heard to play an impressive range of acoustic instruments (guitars, mandolins, bouzouki, violin, dobro, accordion and bass), all rather more than merely competently and in an accessible and nicely unflashy style. Their playing skills transfer well to the actual arrangements, which are managed with an enviable degree of good taste and creativity. So, although you notice that there's a lot going on instrumentally, the arrangements are genuinely song-enhancing, being largely unobtrusive and allowing the lyrics to breathe due to their intrinsic restraint and sensitivity.

The already rich acoustic tapestry is filled out just a little further by the flute playing of Tony Patterson (on loan from prog-rock band ReGenesis) and percussion from Finn McArdle on a couple of tracks.

Overall, I rather liked the duo's accomplished approach and their wholly natural and confident feel for their craft, even if two or three of the songs still haven't made much of an impression on me even after several plays - and despite a nagging familiarity that washes over me on hearing songs like *From The Lighthouse* in particular; but worry not, in this game *c'est la vie!*

The CD is available from the website

www.myspace.com/itsacoustica

www.itsacoustica.com

or from Newcastle retail outlets JGWindows and Roots2music.