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Jess Chizuk is an indie-folk/Americana singer-songwriter in her late twenties from Buffalo, NY, with a number of songwriting awards and achievements under her belt. Normally a busy performer across the USA (touring in a van!), the reduction in gigs due to COVID caused her to turn to doing music reviews.

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Traditional Graffiti - 1
CD review by Chris Spencer
TN2431-87 - \$15

Sometimes a CD comes along that is a surprise and such a pleasure, despite being based in a genre that is familiar, to such an extent that the listener is taken aback at how they could be moved by new music.

Sometimes, it's the choice

of material, perhaps familiar tunes arranged or presented in a different way, or the musicians seem to gel perfectly.

I feel that way with this release.

Traditional Graffiti are a trio of men based in Sydney: Nigel Walters, Ian Macintosh and John Milce.

Their choice of instruments is not complex - two vocalists, one percussion, guitar, melodeon and mandolins.

I hope the trio aren't insulted when I describe them as 'experienced', which is borne out in their common past history, all having been members of the Wheeze & Suck Band.

A bit more research found that the trio have already recorded an earlier album, Waterside, in 2014.

Macintosh has also performed with, and recorded under the moniker, The Dukes.

The descriptions that the trio have included on their BandCamp site include folk, acoustic, roots.

They could also add early blues.

Most of the material is written by the band, including two instrumentals, ("Fool's Round" & "(Up The) Dilly Dancer").

There are takes of two traditional numbers ("Somerset Wassail") and an acknowledgement to a Tommy Johnson song, "Cool Drink of Water Blues", recorded in 1928.

I am not familiar with Johnson's song, so I presume the arrangement is similar or they've borrowed some lyrics.

One other songwriter, Steve Knightley of Show of Hands, is credited for writing "Longdog".

First up is a medley of two tunes "Fool's Round" "Puzzlejug", followed by the traditional "Somerset Wassail", which leads

into the first rendition of "Come In Come In".

Designated as a bonus track, there's an 'electrique mix' of "Come in" which had me thinking of Fairport Convention.

My partner described their sound as very English, not surprising really, since all 3 members were apparently born in the UK.

This track of the two songs runs to eight minutes, making good use of the main vocals, echoing support vocals and a droning underbelly.

However it's one of the strongest tracks on the CD.

"Longdog" is coupled with "Poacher's Run"; it's a rollicking jaunt both invoking a poaching theme.

"White Bread & Whiskey" is a bluesy thing, the tempo is slowed down compared to other tracks and I suspect is deliberately recorded to sound like the era in which Tommy Johnson performed.

I enjoyed the use of the melodeon towards the end, which leads into a rousing mass choir.

"(Up The) Dilly Dancer" is another instrumental lead by the melodeon, it becomes almost a march.

"Tomorrow Night" is a love song, and to my mind is a bit out of place on this recording.

Highly recommended.



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