

Southern Tenant Folk Union

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Revivals, Rituals & Union Songs

Ugly Nephew

**London nu-grass sensations
shy of bull's-eye with old-time
joy and pain**

Sounding like vintage Appalachian controlee yet brewed in London, their self-titled debut wowed rootsy circles with their Dillards-hot banjo/fiddle/mandolin/guitar/string-bass prowess. Album two highlights the band as songsmiths and singers. Among a mixed bag of hootenanny sawdust-kickers and backporch laments, Back To Front and No More Hard Times (No More Trouble) are sad and thoughtful songs to live with and digest. Like The Band they can all sing, but proficiently rather than with those mysterious timbres that makes, say, The Unfaithful Servant so heartbreaking. When Southern Tenant Folk Union's Tardis alights near the present day, as in their song Cocaine, their drug hell certainly sounds closer to The Carter Family than Babyshambles; yet, compared to Gillian Welch's My Morphine, it has the air of a BBC costume drama rather than a ghostly echo of other times and other lives that haunt your imagination.

Mat Snow