

Arts

FOLK

SOUTHERN TENANT FOLK
UNION: THE NEW FARMING
SCENEJOHNNY ROCK RECORDS,
£10.99

★★★★★



WHAT this Edinburgh-based band are doing is intriguing – reclaiming back

from across the Atlantic the bluegrass style so informed in the first place by emigrant Scots and Irish music. The result is a convincingly seamless fusion, with no affected twangs or drawls, but grittily eloquent Scots vocals ringing above countryish but often dark-toned tensions of fiddle, mandolin and banjo.

The album opens in gripping style with the only traditional song, *South Ythsie*, an auld North-East feein' ballad, which John Langan, lead singer on most tracks, delivers compellingly over taut banjo and guitar, while the title track spells out a dystopian rural future – Lewis Grassie Gibbon meets JG Ballard – with surging vocal harmonies riding a railroad of strings. There is further potent harmonising in *Hardy* and in the stark, a cappella rendering of *Those Little Grains of Sand*, while *Don't Take No Notice* drives along in furious breakdown style.

JIM GILCHRIST