

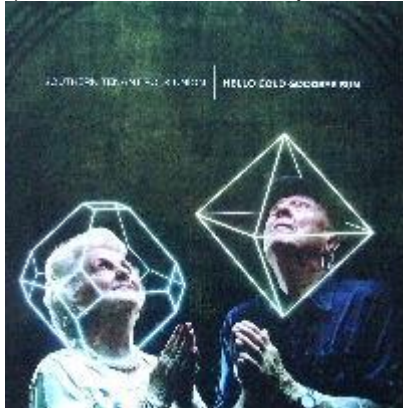
Northern Sky HCGS Review 20th Jan 2013

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Allan Wilkinson, Northern Sky

Album Review: Southern Tenant Folk Union - Hello Cold Goodbye Sun (Johnny Rock)

By Allan Wilkinson - Posted on 20 January 2013



The fifth album release by the Southern Tenant Folk Union once again challenges our perception of home-grown bluegrass-based music, with a dozen new and highly original songs. The theatrical aspect of the band's live performances is once again evident on HELLO COLD GOODBYE SUN, as the vintage suited musicians gather around a circle of microphones, as in the old days, to create that essentially 'live' feel. Anyone who has seen the band live will know that dextrous traditional bluegrass is no problem to these fine musicians, but instead of thumbing through Bluegrass Unlimited mag in venue green rooms, Pat McGarvey is more likely to be found devouring Ray Bradbury novels or Sci-Fi Now, hence the futuristic approach to this band's material.

With interesting topics infiltrating the song writing and a healthy mixture of voices delivering the songs, including Ewan Macintyre, Carrie Thomas and Chris Purcell, the album keeps our interest through to the end. This is also due to the captivating arrangements, which are often uncommonly dramatic such as Jed Milroy's suspenseful *Aberdoir* and Pat McGarvey's particularly melodramatic *Crash*, which sees the economic crisis turned into a Cronenberg movie. It's all pretty much a healthy progression in a genre seldom investigated further than the end of 5th North Avenue in Nashville. The horror/sci-fi themes permeate the material with a determined ardour; even the cover design leans more towards the Chemical Brothers than the Stanley Brothers.

Despite the dark themes, there are one or two moments of exceptional beauty, such as Carrie Thomas's ethereal *Dark Passenger* and Chris Purcell's reclining *Relic of a Reasonable Mind*, which sounds a little like Astrud Gilberto has been invited back after the party.

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