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Southern Tenant Folk Union – Hello Cold Goodbye Sun (+ Full Album Stream)

by ALEX on 22 JANUARY, 2013

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The latest offering from Edinburgh based roots collective **Southern Tenant Folk Union** 'Hello Cold Goodbye Sun' is fizzing with emotional charge, built upon steps taken in past releases they continue on their trail into virgin snow where they prosper and relish the prospect of challenging themes. They depict worlds unlike any other folk / roots music act, worlds that occupy the post-apocalyptic, the writing on the wall for the modern man that deal in failing economics and dystopian post oil futures. Between them they form multi-talented band as well as a powerhouse of lyricists...five of the band provide lyrics on this release, a far cry from the norm.

The sci-fi imaginings are also present on the cover art design by Belfast based Jonny McClean, the design sits well alongside the J.G. Ballard inspired 'Crash' with it's rhythmic banjo backdrop that was muted to mimic electronic arpeggios of early analogue sequencers conjuring the relentless vehicles that crash and continue on...metaphorical bankers that head on into oblivion blind to consequences taking us all with them.

Their imaginations have no limits, from lyrics to atmospherics...the clarinet opening of 'Spey River' creates an almost languid sense of movement, Carrie Thomas' whispered fragile vocals work this track into an ambient beauty and one of acceptance of nature's tireless movement. She throws a left-hook with 'Days By The Seaside With Ice Cream'...what is seemingly upbeat and cheerful is anything but...it's darkly comical however as the tale unfolds...a husband and wife argument spills out of control, their evil dad ends up with an axe in his head...all they need to do is dispose of the body:

mamma's in the driving seat

daddy's in the back

he's not saying nothing no more

he's covered with a sack

off they head to the beach:

wonder where daddy is now

as the tide comes in and out

mamma buys us all ice cream

some things we'll just forget about

The story telling is so original you can't beat it. The overall sound is recognisable as that of Southern Tenant Folk Union but it's the fine tuning above and under the surface that makes this album stand out from their past releases. The addition of guest instrumentalists such as Steve Fivey on cajon are well noted on his driving backbeats as is Esther Kuck's bodhran on the Scottish trad inspired 'An Duil' on which Carrie Thomas excels on fiddle. Jed Milroy extends his multi-talents on this release with clarinet, a well used mood maker. Additional layers are added by Adam Bulley using EBow that had me looking for who played the synths...magnetic resonance is used incredibly well adding the perfect atmospheric backdrop to accentuate wood and strings. Some ingredients that worked well on **Pencaitland** (2011) return...cinematic soundscapes are in abundance and Lau's sound engineer Tim Matthew was asked to take on recording duties again. The leap on this album shows a band that has honed their skills and even if pre-production was a more difficult and emotionally charged process as is suggested their efforts certainly reaped reward.

This is an album that you'll appreciate more over repeated listens, for a folk and roots album it is way ahead of the game, challenging, inventive and original, it doesn't get much better!

<http://www.folkradio.co.uk/2013/01/southern-tenant-folk-union-hello-cold-goodbye-sun-full-album-stream/>