

VICKI SWAN & JONNY DYER

Paper of Pins

WetFootMusic

Swan & Dyer have steadily honed their distinctive sound for a dozen years, bringing their diverse folk and classical influences to bear on material from England, Scotland and Sweden. Their seventh album presents a typically varied programme of original compositions and settings of traditional lyrics. Both performers sing, and as genuine multi-instrumentalists they fully exploit the rich palette afforded by an impressive range of instruments: Swan plays nyckelharpa, pipes, flute, and whistle, while Dyer contributes frets, accordion, keyboards and cowhorn.



The songs deal with enduring themes of love, loss and derring-do. 'The Blantyre Explosion' tells movingly of an 1877 mining disaster, while the jaunty 'All Hail' brings us to today's Braintree with a music-hall celebration of quick thinking, bravery and nudity – a tabloid editor's delight. The voices combine smoothly in restrained but highly effective harmonies, and the catchy melodies and plentiful refrains will surely prove popular on the folk circuit.

There are gorgeous tunes too. 'Canon' reworks a baroque form popularised by Pachelbel, among many others, in which intertwining harmonies and variations weave serenely around a simple theme. The elegant, wistful 'Horn-tune for Lost Mobile Phone' is another immaculately judged arrangement. Concluding the album most enjoyably is the three-part 'Wedding Suite', which combines tune and song in evoking both the solemnity and the jollity of the occasion.

Swan & Dyer have built a richly deserved reputation for their superb skills in composition, arrangement and performance. *Paper of Pins* is their best album yet, one which has the range, depth and subtlety to reward repeated listening.

Mike Nacey