

THE LASSES & KATHRYN CLAIRE

Live At De Parel Van Zuilen

Private Label

The Lasses are Dutch folk duo Margot Merah and Sophie Janna. They sing in undistractingly lovely harmony, and without a trace of 'accent'; their clear alto and soprano lines blending oh so naturally. Back in 2013, they met Kathryn, a classically-trained singer-songwriter from Portland, Oregon, at a singing session at Mulligan's Irish bar in Amsterdam, quickly discovering a shared love of harmonies and storytelling through music. Their musical and personal friendship over the past three years has resulted in this joint album, recorded live at an intimate concert in October 2016. It presents a well-considered set that really flows: a mix of original compositions, traditional and covers where the ladies' impeccable harmonies are gently accompanied by their own deft and unaffectedly skilled guitar-picking, Kathryn's soaring, lyrical and gloriously rich-toned fiddle and some occasional harmonica and bodhrán.

Needless to say, the first thing that hits the listener will be those fabulous harmonies, which to my ears often bear a striking and uncanny resemblance to The Roches, especially on the wonderful self-penned songs. Those stunning three-part harmonies are a key feature of all of these, always absolutely right for the song and economically deployed. Kathryn's two writing contributions are *Love Has Gone* (a rearrangement of a song from her first solo album) and the ruminative *That Lesson*, while Margot and Sophie provide two songs jointly and one apiece. Margot's melancholy *Bittersweet* is something of a 'sing-a-longy' earworm, while the chorus of Sophie's affectionate *Nightfall* is no less catchy, and the opening *Snow* is indelibly evocative. Pick of the covers is *Hangin' Round* by Timothy Hull, and the concert encore is Cyril Tawney's *Grey Funnel Line*, done in a nicely measured, controlled a cappella (rather reminiscent of Hissyfit's pindrop rendition). Honourable mention, too, for the threesome's meltingly beautiful take on *Craigie Hill* (one of the finest I've come across), where Margot really makes the most of the song's complex contradiction of emotions. But the three ladies can really let rip too, for there's energy in abundance on their rollicking treatment of *The Cuckoo* and Sean McCarthy's *Horo Johnny*.

This is a real gem, and I could listen to these lasses' singing all day – so let's have a double album next time!

www.thelasses.wordpress.com

www.kathrynclairemusic.com

David Kidman