



Paddy Tutty, *Prairie Druid*
(Prairie Druid Music, 1992)

The working rhythm of *Island Spinning Song* gets **Prairie Druid** off to a nice and lively start.

After being so very impressed by her 1998 album, **In the Greenwood**, I was eager to hear this earlier work by Celtic Canadian singer Paddy Tutty. She didn't disappoint.

Tutty employs several fine musicians on the album, but she never relies on them. On *Island Spinning Song*, for instance, she provides multiple vocal tracks as well as nice lines on the whistle and fretted dulcimer. She adds vocal layers on several tracks -- only on the songs *The Prairie Pagans* and *Land on the Shore* does anyone else sing -- and it's always to excellent effect.

Although she draws largely on Irish and Scottish sources for this album, there are plenty of other sources. *George Sand's* is a traditional French dance tune, *All Among the Barley* is an English harvest song, *Wild Hog* and *Land on the Shore* are Appalachian in origin, and *The Prairie Pagans*, *Mina's Waltz* and *The Man Behind the Plough* are Canadian.

An overall excellent album, there are several stand-out numbers. *The Man Behind the Plough*, for instance, is a moving song defending the role of the farmer to a son more interested in the arts and sciences. *The Tankard of Ale*, a traditional Irish tune, gains a baroque flair through Tutty's rendition on harpsichord, as does Tutty's original composition *Mina's Waltz*, which gains a somewhat melancholy air through its harpsichord and fiddle arrangement. *Wild Hog*, which is an Appalachian version of the Child ballad *Sir Lionel*, is a trifle harsh to the ear but it evokes ancient bardic traditions at an almost primal level. The Appalachian hymn *Land on the Shore* is an inspirational conclusion, benefiting from John Henderson's deep harmony vocals.

Helping Tutty out on the album are Ian Mackie (tablas, berimbau, tambourine, tabor), John Geggie (double and fretless bass), Ian Robb (English concertina, Morris bells), Ian Tamblyn (keyboards, hammered dulcimer), Peter Kiesewalter (shawm), John Henderson (bodhran, backing vocals) and Pippa Hall (backing vocals).

- Tom Knapp