

recent CD reviews

Sound

Bytes

by Bob MacKenzie

in the greenwood

Paddy Tutty

Prairie Druid Music

1998

13 tracks

The music on Paddy Tutty's *in the greenwood* comes as a pleasant if somewhat nostalgic surprise. A pleasant pot-pourri of English, Irish, Scottish, and French songs takes the listener back to another, quieter time yet retains the energy inherent to the music.

I must admit that I had not heard of Paddy Tutty before. It seems I should have. A highly respected Canadian folk artist, she has been performing since the Sixties, has a strong academic knowledge of the music she performs, and has released three CD's before this one. She has the sort of reputation that attracts talented producers such as Ian Tamblyn and David Essig and some of Canada's finest folk musicians to work with her. Based on this release, she deserves the reputation.

Much of the folk music, certainly the live folk music, I have experienced in the past decade has fallen into two camps. At one extreme is the so-called Celtic sound of groups like The Mahones or The Rankins, which tends strongly toward popular music forms, usually rock or country. At the other is the ballad, usually English but sometimes Scottish, sung so sweet one can feel the syrup flow. A few fall somewhere in between, presenting a sort of art-folk. Loreena McKennitt and Clannad are leading proponents of this mode.

While I do enjoy these alternative forms of folk music, the feel of it -- very modern at one end of the spectrum and very saccharine and romantic at the other -- often is quite artificial. To hear the music presented in a more traditional form and with obvious conviction is a rare treat. Paddy Tutty offers up a selection that both delights and enthralls.

These are songs that tell stories and Tutty keeps that element alive, not relegating her voice to the role of just another instrument but telling the story clearly and with feeling. Four of the songs are contemporary (penned by Laurie Lewis, Matthew Manera, Brian Pearson, and Tutty herself), but the words and music are entirely consistent with the traditional feel of this release.

While there are some non-traditional instruments in the mix (for example, the Roland keyboard), they do not intrude on Tutty's fine traditional arrangements of the songs. This music would not likely be out of place if performed at the time the songs were written.

The overall quality of the performances on this release is such that it would be difficult to single out one or more songs as being especially good. Each in its own way stands out from the others, yet rather with a quiet elegance than a boorish shoving into the limelight. The beauty of this release is not in any one song but in the cumulative effect of the craftsmanship involved throughout.

Those wanting to learn more about **Paddy Tutty** or *in the greenwood* can visit the Prairie Druid website at www.praiedruid.net
