

LONDON KLEZMER QUARTET

Welcome To Butterfield Green N16 LKQ 002

LKQ's 2010 debut was an exercise in judicious and stately precision, a carefully plotted advert for the rare virtuosity and respectful fidelity that one could expect to encounter at one of their renowned performances.

This more fully realised project, however, adds soul, a flood of ideas and improvisations, and a broad canvas, to make a fine case for LKQ being the most dexterous and interesting of contemporary klezmer ensembles.

Despite their major new following in Australia, to the extent that they headline the National Folk Festival in Canberra, these four virtuosi and writers have focussed their talents on the boroughs of their home metropolis, particularly N16. In the process they have created something close to a contemporary urban klezmer classic, without taking the increasingly fashionable resort to electronics and/or ska.

The album celebrates musing and yearning. Yet for all the new routes and openness to different influences, and through all the dizzyingly dynamic playing of often very technically demanding pieces, there's a profound, almost academic knowledge of klezmer informing everything here, in addition to an understanding of how dramatic this music should be. A committed LKQ play out concentrated moments of heavy and irresistible drama and poignancy throughout, in innovative arrangements that help to create an authentically moving, but never sentimental, rite of reflection.

In *Shiksa Terkisher*, for example, clarinetist Susi Evans considers, through appropriately breezy clarinet, the fascinating incongruities of being "a Viking in a Jewish band". It's all very wistful and light until Carol Isaacs wrests the piece somewhere much earthier with a satisfying interruption of nimble accordeon and seemingly off-the-cuff invention.

In contrast, there's a rich, resonant, almost drone-like approach and atmosphere in the *Boybriker Nign* medley of wedding tunes, while a fabulously doomy and gloomy bass-driven time-shift segues the widescreen of *Norge-Bulgaria 10-11* into the *Hora Batuta* of Dave Tarras.

The confident and compelling swing between the eerie introspection of *Kiev To Karrada* and the fast, triumphantly loose Romanian *Sirbas*, reveals an album and a band right at the creative forefront of what is now a serious klezmer revival across Europe.

www.londonklezmerquartet.com

John Pheby