

Kathryn Williams and Neill MacColl

two

A supremely talented mercury prize nominee with an unrivalled critical reputation teams up with an amazing guitarist/vocalist and member of a hugely influential musical clan... they write and record an album together. This is the story so far of Kathryn Williams and Neill MacColl's "Two".

Kathryn and Neill first met at the Daughters of Albion concert (part of the BBC's Folk Britannia season) where they had been paired to perform "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face", a song which Neill's father, Ewan MacColl, wrote for his mother, Peggy Seeger. "We just clicked, we didn't need to say anything on stage, we could read where the other was going" recalls Kathryn; "within a few hours of first saying 'hello' to each other, we were saying 'yeah, lets get together and make a record'... which was both strange and kind of liberating."

"A while later I went to stay with Kathryn up in Newcastle," says Neill, "we locked ourselves in a room for a few days and the songs just poured out of us. The way we write and play together is like we're both steering the same ship- in the most natural and instinctive way."

Kathryn adds, "It was like when I first started playing music with people; there was just an openness between us and a real love of playing together, putting everything you had into the pot"

The project has been surrounded by goodwill; friends have offered their time or resources for the love of the music- the enthusiasm of Neill and Kathryn is clearly infectious. Kimberley Rew offered his studio to the pair at no cost and they set about making their collection of songs into an album.

Neill explains, "we just started playing and recording the songs live- some with just the two of us and others with Martyn [Barker: percussion] and Simon [Edwards: bass]."

Kathryn continues, "It was amazing, we were in the middle of the most beautiful countryside... we'd jam through a song, all ending at the same time as if it had been rehersed, but martyn and simon had never even heard the songs before and we'd just get them down on tape straight away, before we lost them."

In just six days, they had recorded 21 songs; thirteen of these became "Two". Later they brought in another friend, the veteran engineer/producer Phill Brown (whose credits include Stairway To Heaven alongside numerous seminal albums by the likes of the Rolling Stones, John Martyn, Roxy Music and Brian Eno as well as Talk Talk's Spirit Of Eden and Laughing Stock). the record was mixed in just 5 days and the result is one of the most astonishingly beautiful albums to see the light of day in recent years; one which feels like an instant classic and could have been made at any time in the last four decades.

If there's an over-arching idea to the album, it's about how to capture a moment before it's lost forever. The album was written, recorded and mixed in a little over two weeks- a miniscule timescale in these times of recording, re-recording and digitally manipulating every note of every part played. This is a record in its truest sense: a record of an event. The event is a group of people standing in a room and playing a song together- this is what you're hearing and this is why listening to these songs feels like such a privilege. We're being invited to share in this world of intimacy, the natural affinity of two human beings moving in symmetry. This is the world of **Two**.

The intimacy of these recordings produces the most sublime moments:

Kathryn's almost whispered vocal sliding into a wavering melotron on **6am Corner** perfectly captures the dreamy no-time of a night without sleep.

Come With Me, where two people at a party "taken by the tide way out to sea, past the friends that we used to be", spend the night wondering if they should go further. Neill's high harmonies are fragile and sweet intimate pleas before the song ends.

The forelorn harmonies and sparse guitar picking of **Holes in Your Life** mirror those times when we need to put ourselves back together, emotionally: "if only my life would fit into the corners, i'd slot back the shapes that make me myself".

There are so many great lyrical and musical moments in these recordings- you know that this is one of those records where every track is going to be someone's standout moment and they're going to want to sit alone and listen to it all day.

"Two" Kathryn Williams and Neill MacColl's first album, is due out on March 3rd 2008.
tourdates, more biog info, photos, videos: www.WilliamsMacColl.com

