

fROOTS

ALASDAIR FRASER & NATALIE HAAS

Abundance Culburnie CUL124

More than ten years in and only the fourth album from this remarkable duo, who still sound as fresh and inventive as they did back at the beginning. Fraser's fiddling is always a joy to behold, and Haas' cello – sometimes almost a percussion instrument, sometimes a wall of sound, sometimes taking the lead lyrically – go together like a horse and carriage. As with the last album, the duo make judicious use of some extra musicians (including Donald Shaw, James MacIntosh and even a Nashville brass section) but they're always subservient to the soaring fiddle melodies.

The music comes both from the Scottish Fiddle tradition and Fraser himself. His *Howard Booster's Style* is just a drop-dead gorgeous tune; the five pieces in the commissioned *Connie Suite* are all inspired by dances (the Django-influenced *Hot Club d'Écosse* lets Fraser do Grapelli impressions while *Ougadougou Boogie* coaxes unusual rhythms from the Haas' cello), while the chirpy *The Referendum* commemorates Alex Salmond's visit to the fiddle course at Sabhal Mor Ostaig (the Gaelic college on Skye). This duo always go down a storm live, but rarely tour accessibly, so this album is a hugely welcome substitute – an abundance of riches indeed.

www.culburnie.com

Bob Walton