

SPIRO

New album "Kaleidophonica"

CDRW188 – 20 February 2012

You could be forgiven for thinking that Spiro's music is traditional. If you see a group of musicians with a fiddle, a guitar, a mandolin and an accordion, you're bound to make assumptions.

You wouldn't be that far off, either. The musical heritage of Northern England is at the heart of the quartet's sound. Those are the traditions that gave birth to the band in the first place. But Spiro has grown in the 18 years since they first came together in Bristol. Instead of looking at its genre as a boundary, the band began searching for strands that connect the historic and the modern. Folk structures began to give way to minimalistic classical elements. The sound expanded, absorbing the breathless repetition and carefully constructed climaxes of contemporary electronica, and making the most out of minor variations. Then they stripped out the showy solos that pop up in other folk instrumentals, leaving a lean, progressive, relentlessly innovative core.

"We've got as much to do with minimalist classical and dance music as we have with folk. Even though we use folk tunes, they're raw materials that the rest of the sound is built around," explains guitar player, Jon Hunt

One thing is certain – Spiro are their own people, commendably operating in their own sphere and at their own pace; a highly imaginative and highly disciplined group whose unique sound is unified but never uniform.

Kaleidophonica took 18 months to write – in contrast to Spiro's previous Real World album, *Lightbox* (June 2009), which evolved over ten years! The album title gives a clue to music within, meaning "beautiful sound forms": in Greek, kal = beautiful and eidos = form. *Kaleidophonica*, then, becomes a sonic kaleidoscope, in which the instruments mirror each other, and play out constantly changing patterns. Then there's the Kaleidophone - a scientific instrument invented in the 19th century that converted sound waves into visual patterns – hinting at Spiro's scientific and mathematical approach to their music.

Kaleidophonica, like *Lightbox*, was recorded live in the studio with no overdubs. It is more densely composed than *Lightbox* - the mesh and interplay between the instruments has been developed to create the "halls of mirrors" where the sound is made up of parts that are so enmeshed you can't hear who's playing what, creating a bigger, almost orchestral, sound. The music is composed using a combination of playing, imagination, and use of systems. The arrangements are constructed like an intricate piece of machinery, wound up and played out – with no ornamentation, no vibrato.

Most of the tracks are completely original compositions, with a handful based on traditional folk tunes. ***Kaleidophonica*** is an album of extremes – where chilled tracks, sit alongside some more intense acoustic dance music.

Sprío's music is moving, exciting, and transporting - a musical illusion that it is much more than the sum of its parts, and which gets off the ground and almost takes flight.

*"Spiro are like Detroit techno played by a travelling band out of a Hardy novel – or Steve Reich playing the cider-scented backroom of a village put. Intense and minimal, they roll out complex arrangements with such ease that you feel your heart lift a few inches above its normal resting place" **** The Word*

Reviews of *Lightbox*

*"Magnificent ... rich, moving and cunningly wrought" ***** Songlines*

"Fabulous ... intriguing and exciting" fRoots

*"An oddly compelling, strangely soulful music of mind and body" **** Independent*

*"Refreshingly unnerving" **** Mojo*

*"Sophisticated and adventurous" **** Guardian*

"Breathtakingly moving" BBC Music

"Spiro are a genre of their own" Financial Times

Kaleidophonica – track listing

1 Yellow Noise

2 Steeple

3 The City and the Stars

4 Arches

5 The Mezzotint

6 Rose Engine

7 Abbesses

8 We Will Be Absorbed

9 Aerodrome

10 Softly Robin

11 The Gloaming

12 Swarm

13 Man Made Ghost

14 When Wars Alarmes

Jane Harbour: violin

Jason Sparkes: piano accordion

Alex Vann: mandolin

Jon Hunt: acoustic guitar, cello on tracks 4 & 11

All tracks written by Spiro with arrangements directed by Jane Harbour. The following tracks contain traditional English tunes: *The City and the Stars* features *You've Been Too Long Away*, *Willie Gray*; *Rose Engine* contains *The Weavers Hornpipe*, and *Softly Robin* contains the tune *Softly Robin*. All three tunes come from John Offord's collection *John of the Green, the Cheshire Way* published by Green Man Music. *The Gloaming* features *Saw Ye Never a Bonny Lass* from Matt Seattle's book *The Master Piper: Nine notes that shook the world* published by Dragonfly Music; *When Wars Alarmes* features the tune of the same name from William

Winter's Quantocks Tune Book, edited by Geoff Woolfe and published by Halsway Manor Society, Crowcombe, Taunton Somerset.

Kaleidophonica Tour – March/April 2012

Support: Cliff Stapleton

"Amazing ... Spiro absolutely rock on stage" ***** Venue

March

Weds 14 Theatr Mwldan, Cardigan/Aberteifi
01239 621 200 / mwldan.co.uk

Thurs 15 Muni Arts Centre, Pontypridd
08000 147 111 / rct-arts.org

Fri 16 The Hafren, Newtown/Y Drenewydd, Powys
01686 614 555 / theatrhafren.co.uk

Mon 19 The Junction, Cambridge
01223 511 511 / junction.co.uk

Thurs 22 MAC, Birmingham
0121 446 3232 / macarts.co.uk

Fri 23 Settle Victoria Hall
01729 825 718 / settlevictoriahall.co.uk

Sat 24 Rodewald Suite, Liverpool Philharmonic Hall
0151 709 3789 / liverpoolphil.com

Tues 27 Norwich Arts Centre
01603 660 352 / norwichartscentre.co.uk

Weds 28 The Old Queen's Head, The Angel, London
Themagpiesnest.co.uk

Thurs 29 The Met, Bury
0161 761 2216 / themet.biz

Sat 31 The Fleece, Bristol
0117 929 9008 / thefleece.co.uk

April

Sun 1 The Forge at The Anvil, Basingstoke
01256 844 244 / anvilarts.org.uk

www.realworldrecords.com/spiro

www.spiromusic.com

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