

# The Second Mandolin Album

## Simon Mayor - CD review

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### fROOTS

His first Mandolin Album was a masterpiece of dazzling mandolin, mandola and mandocello playing. It featured an impressive versatility of style: Simon making reference to folk tune themes in his excellent arrangements of classical pieces and including some bonus tunes of his own - all uncompromisingly good. The production was gloriously ambient and pure. And the Second Album - ditto. A supreme recording of outstanding musicianship and a depth of feeling rare to find.

Let's not understate the man's abilities. Simon is a virtuoso of the near entire mandolin collection as well as being no mean fiddler, guitarist and whistle-player. His breathy Andean meanderings on the whistle are as skilled as his jaw-droppingly nimble melody picking on, for example, Bach's Three Part Invention. And never does he overstep the bounds of good taste when it comes to those ludicrous twiddly bits.

The range of material and uniformity of expertise is, once again, notable. Simon's own compositions are very fine with striking and complex melodies. The high spirit of jig, The Hoppings, and the atmosphere creation of Two Days In Tuscany, assisted by the soprano sax of Alan Whetton are just perfect.

However, one of the most striking of the multitudinous outstanding features (I'm falling over myself with superlatives here) is the use of texture. From the exquisite east-European shimmering of Brahms' Hungarian Dance No.1, the delicate interplay on the andante movement of Vivaldi's Concerto for Two Mandolins, the panoramic wonder of his own Buttermere Waltz with its melancholic strain, to the wall-of-sound, mandolin orchestra overdubs on Haydn's Croatian-inspired Finale Spirituoso, the moulding of textures is skilled. So, can't recommend it enough, you'd be a fool to yourself if you didn't ... rave, rave, buy, buy etc. For those familiar with the last, there are no ringing, pure Hilary James vocals on this although she aids and abets on basses along with Simon Price on percussion. But what more do you want from this? Blood?

*Sarah Coxon*

### Vox

The Second Mandolin Album (CDACS014) released on the Acoustics label, is a neat blend of classical arrangements, folkish tunes and what Mayor describes as "original compositions with ethnic influences". Whatever it is sounds good.

The mandolin has an appeal all of its own and Mayor has no qualms about arranging works by great composers. There are adaptations of Brahms' 'Hungarian Dance No 1', Haydn's 'Finale Spirituoso' (which is, in effect, the last movement of his 104th 'London Symphony') a Sonata by Scarlatti, the 'Concerto for Two Mandolins' by Vivaldi and Handel's 'Hornpipe' from the famous 'Water Music'. The music is refreshing and uplifting and the recording surprisingly good by classical indie standards.

*Andy Giles*

### Dirty Linen - (USA)

Simon Mayor, England's foremost mandolinist, plays a variety of specially-designed mandolins which besides having wider scope, also have more in common with violin design. His two albums show him to be as accomplished on the mandolin family of instruments (as well as on several others) as he is versatile. He is accompanied mostly by Hilary James on basses.

The remarkable thing about Mayor is the ease with which he crosses over from his fine arrangements of Bach, Haydn and Vivaldi to his own compositions, which make up approximately half of material on both of his releases. The James/Mayor duo have also recorded an album as two-thirds of an eclectic group called 'Slim Panatella and the Mellow Virginians'. They have also released a fine series called 'Musical Mystery Tour' (fun songs for children from 4-104). All productions are well worth checking out.

*Paul E. Commeau*

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### TOP - Tower Records Magazine

Simon Mayor's The Second Mandolin Album is a heartily recommended release of the present moment, Really, a talent to discover. His dexterity on the full range of the mandolin family has a broad span of material - from the dramatic performance of Brahms' "Hungarian Dance No.1" to the mellow splendour of "Two Days In Tuscany" - I love the atmosphere of this. It is rich and warming. His own "The Buttermere Waltz" is a panoramic wonder with a swelling accompaniment and fluttering mandolin parts.

He is lent musical support by long-time partner Hilary James on basses and by others on percussion and on soprano sax. Simply, or rather intricately, a masterpiece.

### Mandozine

'This is a wonderful release from Simon Mayor. He is an amazing player...'

### Zitty (Italy)

An Italian in England or the real roots of classical music? This could easily be a subtitle for Simon Mayor's albums. Mayor, who is one of England's leading string players specialises in mandolin, mandola and mandocello. He also plays violin, guitar and whistle which adds to the arrangements with great feeling. The ease with which he crosses from Vivaldi to his own Irish inspired reels helps to explain how classical music so often sounds like groomed folk music. He offers the missing link between old and new, between folk and classical music.

*Eva-Marie Kaes*