

# Jazzing up love

The dedication on a folk album to a unionist MP piqued the interest of **Trevor Hodgett**. He asked Sid Peacock, the Bangor singer and musician responsible, to enlighten us







ALL the thousands of albums that over a lifetime have taken over my house, there is but one that is dedicated to a unionist MP. And that is the recently released, traditional folk-based *Love Forgiven* by Bangor singer-

guitarist Sid Peacock and Derbyshire fiddler Ruth Angell, which is dedicated to the late North Down MP Sir James Kilfedder, or at least to his family.

So what's that all about, Sid?

"I got a Kilfedder bursary from North Down council," he explains, referring to an annual scheme that enables artists in various fields to spend time in the Tyrone Guthrie Centre in Annaghmakerrig in Co Monaghan focussing on creative projects.

"The Kilfedder family were very flexible because it was me that got the bursary but I said, 'Look, I want to take Ruth along.' I just bent the rules more and more but they were all cool and enabled it to happen."

Peacock believes that the time in Annaghmakerrig was invaluable.

"Ruth and myself packed our van with recording gear and instruments and went there and stayed for 10 days," he says. "We recorded the album in the music room and it was a perfect environment and created a real vibe as opposed to just going into a studio. It was a lovely time."

A second mystery remains, however.

Peacock's reputation is as the leader of the much-admired avant-garde jazz big band Surge, who are based in Birmingham where he lives with Angell. Given the daring and complexity of his compositions for Surge, what on Earth is he doing releasing an acoustic duo album of folk and original singer-songwriter material, genres that many jazz fans would look down on?

"There's no hierarchy of music at all," he insists.

"That idea is just nonsense.

■ **TEAMWORK:** Sid Peacock and Ruth Angell



"But in the traditional tunes I do definitely do things that would be unexpected. Ruth would do things in a traditional manner because she's very into the folk scene but I'm into all sorts of ways of expressing myself musically and mixing them and matching them, so I like to bend and shape some of the tracks and take them a wee bit further. Like I would play certain chords and do certain harmonic approaches that wouldn't [normally] be in folk music."

Peacock's refreshing mix-and-match approach is evident on *The Humours Of Lissadell*.

"In my teenage years I was into rock 'n' roll and rockabilly and that's a rockabilly riff that I put underneath that tune," he says.

"I personally see a connection between rockabilly and Irish music and hillbilly music which came from the Appalachian Mountains from people who were of Scots-Irish heritage and I see myself connected to that." Peacock cites Christy Moore as a major inspiration: "My jazz stuff is often complex

but with songs I like simplicity and Christy Moore just chooses good songs and delivers them really succinctly. I've seen him in concert a couple of times and he just holds you from start to finish.

"There's a sincerity and a complete conviction. And with this CD I said to Ruth, 'I don't want to make this [musically] interesting. I want to make it like a Christy Moore or Paul Brady CD where you sit down and you just want to sink further back into your seat.'"

The album also includes a musical setting of a haiku, *The Kiss*, by Indian poet Sudeep Sen. "Sudeep was at the Tyrone Guthrie Centre at the same time as us," explains Peacock.

"There was also an artist and another poet and different people and one night we gathered around the table and we did a few tunes and he read his poems and he was really taken with us and he gave us a book and said, 'Feel free to use any of this in your work.'"

"We really loved his stuff so we recorded *The Kiss*. It was the very last piece we recorded and we opened all the windows and we recorded the sound of the whole house. You can hear a few wee footsteps if you listen closely enough."

Peacock enthuses about Angell's musical prowess.

"We've been going out together for about 11 years and we've just had a wee baby, who's three weeks old now," he says.

"I met her at [Birmingham] Conservatoire and the first time I heard her I knew her playing had something in it. She has a vibe in her playing and singing. And I like a particular quality of her voice where she doesn't use too much inflection because I think she's got a very pure and beautiful voice."

"I genuinely love it and to be doing this style of music with Ruth, my partner, is a very personal thing for me and it's lovely."

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Sid Peacock