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Releases April 2017

ALANA & LEIGH CLINE

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Scimitar Records, SRD1601, 10 Tracks

www.leighcline.com/alanaleigh.html

Toronto based Alana & Leigh Cline is a fiddle and guitar duo.

Fiddler Alana ventures into Irish music, having taken two years of Skype lessons from Maeve Donnelly and being the first Canadian to attend Meitheal in Limerick in 2008. Leigh (guitar) has a number of albums under his belt, including forays into Balkan and Greek music. The pair has a fondness for Cape Breton music, with Leigh having co-authored a book on fiddle and guitar in the Cape Breton style. That Cape Breton accent permeates Alana's fiddle playing throughout this CD.

This album is peppered with some fine Celtic tunes, seven of the ten tracks being predominantly Irish tunes, with Alana showing mastery of such pieces as Pigeon on the Gate, The Monaghan Twig and the Swallowtail Reel. She begins track seven with some clever variations on Drowsy Maggie. Alana's Cape Breton fiddle comes to the surface on the Black Mill, with some characteristic double stops towards the end of the tune before it shifts into Crib of Perches. There is a full-on band set with the Whinny Hills of Leitrim as the duo enlist Bill Kervin on bodhrán and Loretto Reid on whistle to flesh out the slipjigs, with the bodhrán and whistle kicking in from the very first note, giving that track a spirited session feel to it. Leigh is at his most interesting on guitar on the Kerry Lassie set, playing the foil to Alana's fiddle.

The duo slow things down for Huntingtone Castle, the version they had from Cape Breton's Sandy MacIntyre. It is a gorgeous slow air and the longest set on the album running in at 9 minutes. It is one of the older tunes Alana plays, composed by John Bowie, who lived from 1759-1815 in Scotland. This was one of the first tunes Alana learned from Sandy MacIntyre. She spent over a ten year period with him from age eight, and it is evident she absorbed the full range of Cape Breton fiddle techniques during that time.

Leigh drives Elizabeth Kelly's and Gusty's Frolics on a chopped guitar and there's a diversion to the Balkans on Leigh's own Offset. The duo consult with Doctor O'Neill's and visit Coleman's Cross, before the closing set, which begins with a short Mason's Apron before culminating in the Canon Reel. If you are looking for a good example of Cape Breton fiddling, then Alana's Mason's Apron showcases the strong beat and attacking bow that is so typical of the island's tradition.

Seán Laffey