



## Live from the Mable Barnes Amphitheatre

### Montana Skies

(DVD + CD)

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange

by **Mark S. Tucker**

([progdawg@hotmail.com](mailto:progdawg@hotmail.com)).

Tell me a cello's involved and I'm already half liking whatever it is. Montana Skies is a husband and wife guitar / cello duo bridging classical music with rock and then occasionally jumping into neoclassical. Jen Adams plays the cello and is as apt to percuss it as any CandyRat guitarist, nor is she the kind of shrinking violet one sees somberly sawing the instrument in an orchestra - that is, Ms. Adams is quite unafraid to express body language as she bows that huge violin. During *Malaguena*, the cellist launches into a furious neoclassical improv, scurrying up and down the neck in a hornet chase, and in *Classical Gas*, she resorts to an odd portable electric cello that's mostly neck with a small soundbox, a much more compact affair allowing her to roam the stage.

Part of the twist to things here are the Adams' sometimes radical arrangements, as in *Classical Gas*, which they turn upside and sneak a bit of *Still My Guitar Gently Weeps* into. *Another Brick in the Wall* gets an Apocalyptika treatment, even more somber than the original despite Jonathan's spanish guitar. Both players use looping devices fluently, subtly expanding their presence to a more chambery fullness where needed. All the numbers are instrumental and can, over and above the deadshot deliveries elsewhere, mellow into quite beautiful statements, as in their original *Canyon Breeze*, a song the Paul Winter Consort would've been proud to have penned.

Jonathan Adams wields his guitar as though the strings were made of glass, eliciting crystalline notes, clear and transparent, precise and defined. He notes to the audience that there's not a lot of music written for guitar and cello. When you think about that, and especially when you hear the highly sympathetic work here, that's rather striking. Such a well-matched sonority and yet the catalogue is scarce...proably because the guitar has always been granted only a place of vulgarity in the classicalist mind for the most part. Ah, but could Rachmaninoff, Ravel, and Faure have but heard what's going on here (and, well, Bartok and Ligeti as well), that prejudice might well have changed overnight.

The crowd quite agrees and is quickly captured. Toss in a medley inspissating the Beatles, the Police, and Kansas before heading towards George Gershwin's *Summertime*, and you have all the makings of a banquet for a sophisticated audience. Count yourself as on of them as you slide into Montana Skies' irresistibly infectious grooves and plentiful interplay and improv, both visually and audially, 'cause you get DVD and CD here, a great little twofer—one for the road, one for the living room.

## Track List:

- Malaguena (traditional)
- Gringo Flamenco (Adams/ Adams)
- Milonga (Roberto DiMartino)
- Classical Gas (Mason Williams)
- Another Brick in the Wall (Roger Waters)
- Canyon Breeze (Adams / Adams)
- Medley: Montana Skies (Jonathan Adams) / Sonata in E-Minor (Antonio Vivaldi) / Eleanor Rigby (Lennon / McCartney)
- El Gitano (Jonathan Adams)
- Medley: Message in a Bottle (Police) / Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds (Lennon / McCartney) / Dust in the Wind (Kerry Livgren)
- America (Adams / Adams)
- Sunburst (Andrew York)
- Summertime (Georger Gershwin)
- House of the Rising Sun (traditional)
- The Edge of the Night (Jonathan Adams)