

THE SPIERS FAMILY
Oh Gin I Were There
Millseat MILLSEAT002

Tom and Maggie Spiers are among the truest modern exponents of Scots traditional song, and on this excellent CD, they are joined by their daughter Emma, whose obvious grasp of the Aberdeenshire tradition rivals their own. The integrity of the 15 tracks here is enhanced by natural family harmonies, as well as Tom's solo fiddle. Although Tom would be the last to claim any kind of orthodoxy for his distinctive style of self-accompaniment, his use of the sustained 'drone' method seems entirely appropriate, even if many of the Greig Duncan sourced songs (there are 11 here) were probably taken down from unaccompanied singers.

Here, such well known gems as the *Singing Molecatcher's*, *Rovin' Ploughboy* and the *Bonny Wee Trampin' Lass* are given a jaunty and cheerful treatment, balanced by some thoughtful adaptations of classic ballads, such as *The Wee Wee Man* (Child 38), where Tom follows established practice in the tradition and uses his own tune. He's also set the poem *The Knock And The Bin* to his own original tune, which certainly highlights in very few words its tragic tale of the Clearances, part of the story of Northeast Scotland as well as that of the West Highlands.

The Braes O' Broo is a wry look at changing times in the northeast, and Emma's strong voice is perfect for this, while Maggie does a grand job of Ian Sinclair's classic *King's Shilling*, giving it a slow and elegant treatment rather than the more usual rousing approach.

Overall, it's a very well produced CD, with enough notes to be adequate rather than comprehensive, and another example of a family keeping up the tradition. This CD is a credit to all, and we can all be quite sure that Aberdeenshire's vibrant tradition is safe in the capable hands of the Spiers family.

Jim Bainbridge