

Ref: <http://www.folkforum.nl/cds/82-cd-recensies/14136-elanor-a-clear-look>

Folkforum – review by Jeroen van Zuylen

Deep Purple, Coldplay, Pearl Jam: any self-respecting band toured the European venues at least once. So balfolk band Elanor from Flanders did that as well. In the last several months accordionist's Bert Leemans' pet band toured all of the important towns of the music business: Leipzig, Vienna, Prague, Belsele, Milan and Berlin. While in our part of Europe the growth of the popularity of balfolk seems to have come to somewhat of a halt, Elanor is contributing to the distribution of this dance phenomenon across the whole of Europe.

The fourteen instrumental tracks on 'A Clear Look', the first long player-album of the young band (an EP was released in 2013), form a very solid whole, for which the order of the songs has been carefully chosen. The result is a nice variety of cheerful melodies and melancholic quiet songs. For example, after a beautiful scottish (Masque) we are taken on a still, almost jazzy mazurka journey (Mateke). In the subsequent suite plinn Souvenirs d'été (music with Breton roots) we are immersed in all possible moods – a perfect fit for unstoppable bon-vivants, for those who keep everything to themselves, for romantic people and for all those who mix well with these characters.

Bart Praet wrote most of the compositions, but the other band members, too, make themselves known as talented songwriters. For example, the song Northern Village has been written by Jelle Van Cleemputte, an atmospheric track that would suit fine as a soundtrack to one of the better movies (rainy alleys in a deserted village...).

The strength of this album is not only found in the compositions that have been written so well, but is also conveyed by the solid and tight performances – always a pleasure for those audiences that like dancing. The musician who plays the hurdy-gurdy, Thomas Hoste, plays more convincingly than ever; Bart Praet turns out to be a virtuose on uilleann pipes and flute while the young musicians Kuni Quintens and Jelle van Cleemputte (guitar and bass respectively) produce strong riffs with the strings of their instruments. The fact that there are no drums nor percussion is remarkable (except for the jigs and reels, in which Jeroen Geerinck plays the bodhran very well). It turns out the drums and percussion are not missed at all: the instruments that are used, do even more justice to the sound they produce. They alternate each other in a constant flow of rhythms and melodies.

After listening to 'A Clear Look' you can rest assured that the live performance will be of a high standard too: Elanor's concerts will result in a superbly satisfactory folk party. The dancing audience will be knackered, but satisfied and be longing for an encore.

Jeroen van Zuylen