

Paul & Liz Davenport
'Songbooks' HATRC02
Released April 2008



<http://www.hallamtrads.co.uk>

What they say:-

Paul and Liz may not have a wide profile outside of their South Yorkshire stamping-ground but as singers they're blessed with singular, sturdy and confident voices; they also possess a strong awareness of their role as song-carriers, being both steeped in the tradition and well versed in contemporary songwriting within the tradition. This is their second disc of "songs which (they) love to sing", and the well shows no signs of running dry....Paul and Liz launch into the singing with gusto and a keen sense of the inherent drama of the songs. On a third of the songs, the couple's son Gavin contributes to the already impressively-together family "melting-pot" with some spectrally close and responsive vocalising that veers almost wilfully between harmony and unison, often during the course of a single song and to quite eerie effect. The pick of the solo tracks is Paul's startlingly original, dark and bleak treatment of Lucy Wan (with his own almost improvisatory guitar accompaniment tinted with both raga and flamenco).

... Recording's excellent, booklet notes are fine: an honest and most attractive release of some splendid – and fascinating – repertoire.

fROOTS No. 301 July 2008

Sheffield has quietly become a bastion of folk music, and two of its foremost defenders are Paul and Liz Davenport, a Hull-bred singing couple with a deep love of traditional song. They are confident singers solo and in harmony. Their son Gavin lends his voice to this 53 minute CD, while Richard Arrowsmith plays melodeon on two songs. Gavin and Richard are members of Sheffield-based bands Crucible and Hekety.

I reviewed their previous album, *Under the Leaves* for TLT. This one also displays their pleasure in the grand old songs and ballads, their willingness to tweak them here and there and their interest in unusual variants or tune settings. For instance, there's a great version of *The Unquiet Grave*, which turns it into a perfect chorus song. I was also delighted with Paul's beautifully-phrased singing of *Died for Love*, a lesser known version of *A Sailor's Life* from the singing of Joseph Taylor via Mike Waterson. Paul shows his ability to write within the tradition in *The House that Jack Built* and *The Mermaid*.

There are dark tales aplenty, with much evidence of humankind's cruelties. But there is light as well as shade, and many songs have a singaround feel to them. I'm sure they've been heard in many a Sheffield pub. Two of the best are about country life; a Hampshire version of *Stormy Winds*; and *The Guist Ploughman*, a sowing song by Mike Barber. There are also two pieces of Victorian melodrama – one about *Grace Darling*, the other from the *Indian Mutiny* by *Captain Darling* (evidently not just a character from *Blackadder* goes Forth).

The photographs for *Songbooks* fit the title. Maybe they were taken in the Vaughan-Williams Memorial Library at Cecil Sharp House, or maybe they show a private library to die for. I'd ask to have those books as a Christmas present, but Paul and Liz are more deserving. They are steeped in this stuff and in helping to keep the tradition fresh through their research, their respectful refashioning and their community-based approach.

The Living Tradition, Issue 83 2009

What they said about 'Under the Leaves' HATRC01

Thought provoking – dark and intriguing ... Largely an acapella affair with occasional guitar and melodeon, they readily admit that this CD has been a long time coming, and one senses that the non-run-of-the-mill material has been carefully chosen... They have a pure way with diction too, and theirs are vocals, strong and strident at times but never overwrought... it can stand comparison to releases with far higher profiles.

'EDS English Dance & Song' Winter 2006

I have seen Paul Davenport playing fiddle in sessions at numerous festivals over the years. What I didn't know until recently is that he is a wonderful singer with a warm and powerful voice. Here he is joined by his wife, Liz, who has an equally warm and powerful voice – indeed their voices are so similar that there are moments in these tracks when it sounds like double-tracking. This is a lovely collection of great songs including several that are really interesting adaptations of traditional ballads. I particularly like Paul's re-write of *Henry Martin*... its jaunty tune and brilliantly straightforward lyrics. (Simple, straightforward lyrics are far from simple and straightforward to write). I'm also impressed by his version of *Childe Owlett* bringing the gruesome tale into a modern context. Highly recommended for aspiring singers and song-writers alike.

'Shreds and Patches' Issue 38 Spring 2007

Paul & Liz are available for bookings at clubs and festivals

Paul & Liz Davenport, Tel. 07947 490 052 Email: admin@hallamtrads.co.uk