

TOMMY AND SAUNDRA O'SULLIVAN

Safe Home

Own Label, 12 Tracks, 49 Minutes

www.osullivanscourthousepub.com, www.cdbaby.com

This is a beautiful refreshing album mixing many well-known and sometimes overplayed songs with a few relatively unheard pieces. The husband and wife team from Dingle must surely be the best exponents of what Irish folk should be.

As always this is a blessing and a curse for a performer. There is the fear that a listener has an all too favourite rendition that no other performer gets a chance to better. But also there is the challenge to rescue a hackneyed song and breathe new life into it. Thankfully this duo is well up to such a challenge and one is left thinking of either "how did I get so hung up on the old version" or "was that a new song with the same title?"

Feel So Near is a wonderful opener on the album giving us the fresh voices that are not submerged in overproduction and the instrumental at the conclusion enhances the feeling to perfection.

We have heard many versions of *Lord Franklin* over the years and seeing the title here we wonder what they can do with it. The answer is that they give it a great fresh rendition. They move from the well known to the lesser-known *Do Carlow Boys Come Home* and show their versatility to full effect.

Their acoustic renditions of songs like *The Galway Shawl* remind us of the beautiful simplicity of such songs. They may often gain from a full-bodied band but these are classics needing just good voices and minimal backing. They are the essence of Irish folk and one loves the chance to return to those quiet beautiful renditions.

A new one to me was *Steel and Stone* and I must confess to being won over by this lovely song beautifully rendered and it will get lots of plays in the days and months ahead.

Add to these their lovely versions of *Peggy Gordon*, *Saw You Running* and the very much underrated and under performed *Song for A Winter Night* and the listener gets a fantastic bargain of great songs, great performance and the resurrection of some of the best music to be played on this island.

Nicky Rossiter