

Portuguese music and usually keeps to himself, working reclusively, recounting Portuguese historic episodes with a singular approach to traditional rhythms and a tasteful approach to the popular songbook. It's easy to keep track of the footsteps that Vila Navio have followed in taking Dias' example, placing the tradition in the centre of their music, albeit with a jazzy and classical twist.

Vila Navio's music has originality in mind and their quest for a different sound has been a successful one. The allure in André Coelho Rodrigues' voice, similar to that of António Zambujo, finds a welcoming solace in the Portuguese and Brazilian popular song forms he uses. But Vila Navio are actually more poignant whenever they venture into uncharted waters, whenever jazz rears its head less timidly and the music becomes a hazier take on tradition – as it does in

'Douro' (with a little help from Fausto Bordalo Dias) and 'À Despedida'.

GONÇALO FROTA

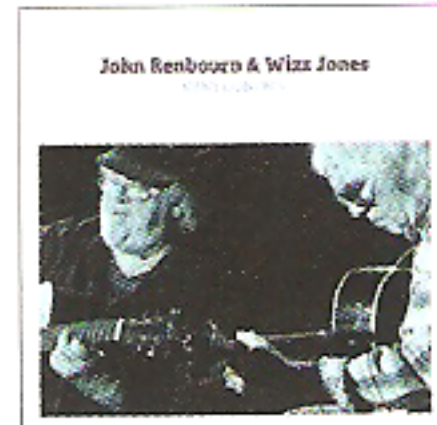
TRACK TO TRY *À Despedida*

John Renbourn & Wizz Jones Joint Control

Riverboat Records (42 mins)

★★★★★

Final recording from bluesy baroque-folk guitar genius



Long celebrated as one of the UK's foremost acoustic guitarists, John Renbourn's work, whether solo or with supergroup Pentangle, always demonstrated his ability to blend all kinds of motifs. Renbourn continued touring and recording right up until a few days before his death in March. That his final tour and recording was

in partnership with Wizz Jones, maverick Balham folk singer, guitarist and songwriter, is appropriate. The two men were friends for more than half a century, bonded by choosing to work in British folk and by their kinship with the likes of Bert Jansch and Davey Graham. This album finds John and Wizz interpreting songs by Jansch, Bob Dylan, Joseph Spence, Big Bill Broonzy and Jackson C Frank – all inspirations on what was a very fluid, open acoustic music scene in the 60s. As Pete Paphides' excellent liner notes make clear, the two men possessed extremely different approaches to playing and this made for a winning challenge. As the music flows, a real sense of engagement leaps out. If you are an old fan or someone yet to experience Renbourn and Jones, then you must get this excellent album.

GARTH CARTWRIGHT

TRACK TO TRY *Hey Hey* ▶



Antti Kokkola

Okra Playground Turmio

Nordic Notes (46 mins)

★★★★★

Lady's Finn-gers (and a few gentleman's too)



This is one of the most exciting bands to come out of Finland in recent times. The members of Okra Playground are very experienced on the Finnish scene in various other ensembles, but together, here, their distinctive approach to the tradition is driven by a captivating energy, one solidly informed by a deep knowledge of and passion for their folk heritage. A must for any fans of the legendary Värttinä, they create a musical tapestry where *jouhikko* (lyre), *kantele* and accordion weave magical

textures alongside contemporary percussion, keyboards and pulsing bass, with harmonies that swirl among the inviting rhythms. The exquisite vocals dip to the merest whisper as well as soaring to the scariest heights.

Their narratives make for compulsive listening, daring the listener to step further into their beguiling world. Brilliant performers, they seem to be rewriting the rules of how to be a real force on the contemporary scene while passionate about their Finnish roots.

FIONA TALKINGTON

TRACK TO TRY *Turmio*

**TOP
OF THE
WORLD**
TRACK 6