

Neil Yates - Five Countries (2011)

Written by bluesever

Thursday, 24 May 2018 12:54 -

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1. *Flutter and Flight* 5:36 2. *Snowdonia / Sail the Sky* 7:09 3. *Frozen Forest* 6:42 4. *Dustfall / Spin the Sky* 5:31 5. *Freedom Lost* 3:50 6. *Izabella's Dream* 8:59 7. *Slipreel* 9:20 8. *Storm On the Irish Sea* 5:48 9. *Rainy Harbour* 7:49 10. *Seventh Sense / Waterman's* Neil Yates - trumpet, flugelhorn, tenor horn, whistle, voice, loops Zsolt Bende - classical guitar Cormac Byrne - bodhran, cahon, pandhera, cymbals, additional percussion

The music of *Five Countries* migrates like traditional musicians taking their music from Ireland and Scotland to America or from Romania and Hungary to Spain. It takes the sounds of their *Five Countries* to places and cultures familiar and less so. Songs like *Flutter and Flight* or the gentle dancing of *Izabella's Dream* (for Bende's lovely daughter) might carry you to Spain with their echoes of flamenco. *Slipreel/Thyme And Tide* might remind you first of a bar you know in Galway but hints as well towards North Africa. Remember too that sailors carried these tunes far and wide. Even a tune with its own defining sense of time and place like *Storm on the Irish Sea* swirls at times like a Mediterranean squall. ---Editorial Reviews, amazon.com

Trumpeter Neil Yates has an extensive discography, covering an impressive range of musical styles, but *Five Countries* is only his second album as leader, and his debut for Wales' Edition Records. Joined by guitarist Zsolt Bende and percussionist Cormac Byrne, Yates has produced a melodic and atmospheric collection of tunes which fuses jazz and folk music.

The title of *Five Countries* apparently refers to the three musicians' countries of birth, migration and residence. The album takes its inspiration from a much wider geographical range, with

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music from Europe, Africa and North America all making their presence felt.

Yates studied jazz at the Guildhall School of Music, has contributed to recordings by pop acts such as Robbie Williams, and has an extensive background in folk music. He's worked with leading lights of the British and Irish scene including Kate Rusby, Karen Tweed and Michael McGoldrick—the composer of "Waterman's"—and was a member of the splendidly named folk/reggae band Edward II and the Red Hot Polkas. Yates' folk heritage comes over strongly on this set, both in the mellow and breathy sound of his horn playing and in his spacious, ever so slightly mysterious compositions.

Byrne's bodhran playing adds another strong strand of folk to the album, while his use of other percussive instruments adds depth and color. Bende's subtle and emotive acoustic guitar work has a bright edge that contrasts beautifully with Yates' softer horn sound, coming to the fore on "Frozen Forest"—where Bende's light and deft approach is truly melancholy—and on his own lilting ballad, "Freedoms Lost."

Five Countries readily evokes images of open spaces, coastlines and harbors, and hills and mountains. With none of the tension or urgency of urban life, this is music that conjures visions of a peaceful and bucolic rural idyll. ---Bruce Lindsay, allaboutjazz.com

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