

Nicky Swann CD Review

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HOW DOES YOUR LAND LIE?

Opening Doors Music

***1/2

On the rear of the gatefold card liner, Swann verbalises the theme underpinning her sophomore release—'We all come from somewhere: city, town, village or hamlet. I come from a Devon market town; here are some of its stories.' The market town is Newton Abbot. The lyrics to the eleven songs are reproduced in the six-way fold-out liner insert, and are accompanied by short narratives which offer her insights into their background. HOW DOES YOUR LAND LIE? was recorded in nine days at Sawmills Studios which is located near Fowey, on the south coast of Cornwall, and production is credited to Swann and studio engineer Tom Joyce.

The female narrator of "New Found Lands" anxiously awaits the return of her husband who sailed across the Atlantic to fish for cod, and finds her speculating: 'Are there pretty girls in new found lands, Will I fade from your dreams?' "Because Of You" recalls the achievements of late nineteenth century theatre designer Frank Matcham, with some two hundred structures nationwide to his credit, including the London Palladium. 17th century diving machine inventor John Lethbridge is remembered in "Diving," while "One Track Line" recalls the tragic case of a poor pregnant woman who committed suicide in that bygone age when many were condemned to workhouse hardship.

The weaving of a rope from human hair is the focus of "Ropewalk." Underpinned by a blues rhythm, the "Union Babies" lyric is adapted from a Dr. John William Ley poem. Ley was a late 19th century social reformer, a contemporary of children's home founder Thomas Barnardo, and a Newton Abbot doctor. Here, Swann particularly alludes to Ley's concern over the suffering endured by workhouse children. Local artist David Stuttard, is Swann's focus in "A Piece Of Me." A Stuttard painting graces the cover of HOW DOES YOUR LAND LIE? As for the upbeat "Days Like These," it celebrates a monetary windfall at the Newton Abbot races.

As a body of work, HOW DOES YOUR LAND LIE? is a thematic, acoustic folk song collection and Swann's guitar, ukulele and voice are supported by cajon, piano, cello, pedal steel, violin and more. Arthur Wood

<http://www.nickyswann.com/>

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