



Fairport Convention & Matthews Southern Comfort **"Fairport Convention & Matthews Southern Comfort"** Voiceprint Records

This thirty-minute long 'artefact,' directed by Tony Palmer, features Fairport Convention Mark 7 and Matthews Southern Comfort in performance at the Maidstone Fiesta [in Kent, England] on 5th June 1970. At the outset, in the role of narrator, dj John Peel [d. 2004] introduces this rapidly vanishing type of English family oriented event with *"It's a hot summer's afternoon at a local festival."* Shots of 'obviously' avid young music fans dancing in the 'mosh pit' provide a common threaded, while the remaining attendees 'captured on camera' range in age from month old babies [accompanied by their parents], to testosterone fuelled recumbent teenage couples and seemingly utterly bemused oldsters. Peel subsequently offers the insight that Fairport's performance *"Took place between a team of performing chimpanzees and a team of helicopters from the Army"* – later, you witness them take off and disappear into the distance - following which the Fairport's break into the Swarbrick/Thompson composition *"Now Be Thankful,"* the A Side of a late 1970 non-album single.

In the summer of 1970, Convention Mark 7 was composed of founding members Richard Thompson [lead guitar] and Simon Nicol [rhythm guitar] plus Dave Swarbrick [violin], Dave Pegg [bass] and on the first of his two stints with the band Dave Mattacks [drums]. The quintet's opening string-fest *"Various Jigs & Reels"* is followed by *"Sir Patrick Spens"* the sad tale of an inexperienced sailor who perishes in a watery grave having been dispatched on a mission by the King of Scotland. Messrs. Swarbrick, Thompson and Pegg share the lead vocal on the latter tune, and then it's over to those darned whirlybirds.....

Wedge between Fairport's initial three and subsequent two song segment are a couple of tunes performed by Matthews Southern Comfort, a short-lived aggregation led by Mark 4 Fairport alumni Ian Matthews. Supporting Matthews' lead vocal are the late Gordon Huntley [pedal steel guitar] who passed in 1985, plus Carl Barnwell [rhythm guitar, vocals], Mark Griffiths [lead guitar, vocals], Andy Leigh [bass] and Scot/former Marmalade alumni Raymond Duffy [drums]. Matthews' performance of Arlo Guthrie's *"My Front Pages"* [the title puns Dylan] is followed by Sylvia 'Fricker' Tyson's *"Southern Comfort"* – the latter includes a closing reprise of *"Nottamun Town,"* a traditional tune that appeared on the Matthews' era Fairport recording **"What We Did On Our Holidays"** [1969]. Featuring Messrs. Swarbrick and Nicol on mandolin, the film returns to the Fairport's for *"Flatback Caper,"* following which Dave picks up his fiddle for the frenetic *"Jenny's Chickens & The Mason's Apron."* *"Sir Patrick Spens"* and *"Flatback Caper,"* both traditional numbers, appeared on **"Full House"** which Island Records issued the month after this film was made. During October that year MSC topped the U.K. Pop Chart with their rendition of Joni Mitchell's *"Woodstock."* Matthews left the band soon afterwards.

A BBC employee during the late 1960's, Tony Palmer's reputation as a serious documentary maker was assured following the early November 1968 screening of the sixty-minute long **"All My Loving - A Film Of Pop Music"** [1968]. Viewed as a radical work at the time, the film merged current pop music with scenes from [controversial] world events as well as presenting interviews with Hendrix, Frank Zappa, Pete Townshend, Eric Burdon, Paul McCartney, and, George Harrison's mother. Palmer subsequently produced the BBC television music magazine **"How It Is,"** a programme that featured regular contributions from former Radio London [pirate] dj John Peel [according to Palmer, Peel worked under a pseudonym] and Richard Neville [Australian born founder/publisher/editor of the counterculture magazine Oz]. By the dawn of the seventies Palmer was working as an independent filmmaker.

This DVD contains a sixteen-minute interview, conducted by Jon Kirkman, with the filmmaker in which we learn that he was introduced to the Fairport's by [friend] Sandy Denny, although Denny had departed by the time Tony was invited to make this 'loss leader' film by the Welsh born actor Sir Stanley Baker [d. 1976]. As well as being lead actor, Baker had been a co-producer of the box-office hit "**Zulu**" [1964], a movie that featured the future Sir Michael Caine in his first starring role. Richard Burton, a former schoolmate and close friend of Baker's, narrated the opening and closing sequences of "**Zulu**." It appears that concurrently the, then, thirty something director/producer Michael Winner had been interested in filming MSC hence their appearance here. This 'short' remains unique since, in the annals of Fairport Convention's seemingly endless history, it's the only known film of the "**Full House**" line-up.

Folkwax Score 7 out of 10

Arthur Wood.

Kerrville Kronikles 02/08.