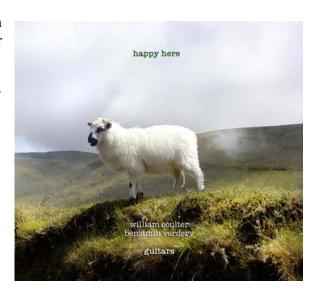


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William Coulter and Benjamin Verdery, Happy Here

By Julia Crowe

Happy Here reunites Grammy-winning Celtic guitarist William Coulter and classical guitarist Benjamin Verdery ten years after their Songs for Our Ancestors. The new album features their spirited and exceptional arrangements of popular tunes, opening with an instrumental version of Eddie Vedder's "Rise" from the film Into the Wild. Their version delivers a decidedly sonorous pitch compared to the original, incorporating the vocal melody effectively to create a lovely, grounded, and sweet lullaby. They imbue Simon Jeffes's sprightly, upbeat "Music for a Found Harmonium" with ponticello color and a seamless exchange of rhythm between Coulter's steel string and Verdery's classical guitar. The duo's version of Cream's "White Room" opens with a hovering e-bow introduction by Coulter and, just when the arrangement threatens to become prettily soporific, they pull a Handel's "Surprise" Symphony



effect of unleashing all the mad rhythms of the original with sneakily inserted quotes of other Cream tunes, ending in a flourish of "Sunshine of Your Love." Other highlights include the lyrical, striding pace of Seán Ó Riada's soulful "Women of Ireland," and Verdery's pensively heartfelt "Tread Lightly." Recommended. (Mushkatweek)