

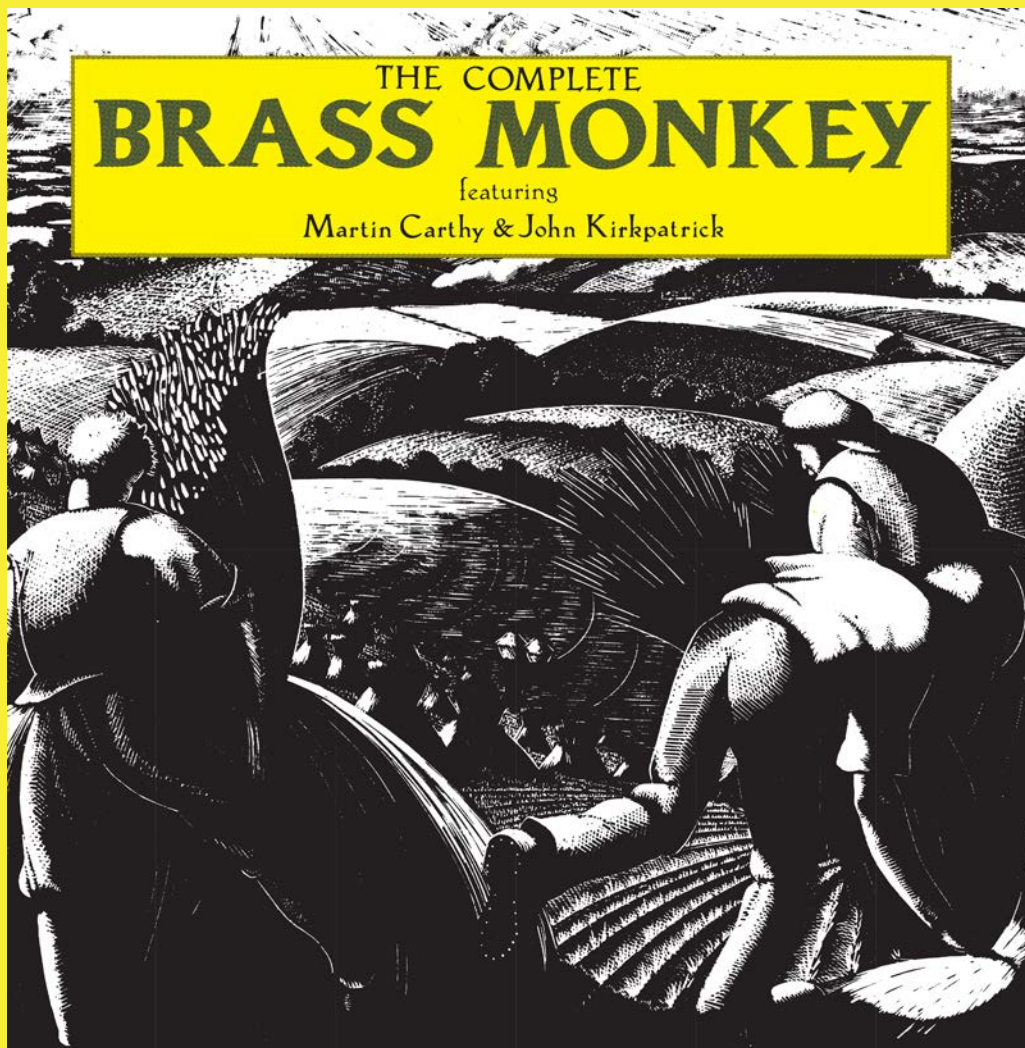


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THE COMPLETE BRASS MONKEY

02



Martin Carthy - guitar, mandolin, vocals
John Kirkpatrick - anglo-concertina, melodeon, button accordion, vocals
Howard Evans - trumpet, flugelhorn, vocals
Martin Brinsford - C-melody saxophone, mouth-organ, percussion
Roger Williams - trombone, vocals (tracks 1-9)
Richard Cheetham - trombone (tracks 10-18)

Tracks 1 - 9 (P) Gama Records, © 1983 Topic Records Ltd. Produced and recorded by Jerry Boys at Livingston Studios, London. A Gama Records Ltd. production.

Tracks 10 - 18 (P) & © 1986 Produced and recorded by Tony Engle at IdealSound Recorders, London.

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BRASS MONKEY's brief career during the first half of the 1980s represents an important milestone in the world of British folk music. The quintet boasted a most unusual line-up - trumpet & trombone, various squeezeboxes, guitar or mandolin, & percussion. In full-flight, these acoustic instruments blasted out a wild, gloriously unique sound - the most exciting folk-rock since the heyday of Fairport Convention & Steeleye Span....

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'Lark Rise', with the Albion Band. During that time the Albions became a semi-resident house band at the National for a number of Bill Bryden's productions. The band's membership expanded according to the demands of each play. Soon established as a mainstay of the ensemble was trumpeter Howard Evans. Martin Carthy invited Evans to add his distinctive trumpet playing to three of the songs he was recording for his 'Because It's There' album (Topic 12TS389). The trio of Carthy, Kirkpatrick and Evans began to play occasional folk club gigs following the record's release in 1979. Howard recalled in a Swing 51 interview that "Martin popped into the green room one day and he was talking to John, and they asked me if I fancied doing some gigs. On almost the first gig, he said they'd like to use a drummer and harmonica player called Martin Brinsford." Brinsford's recruitment was to be an essential ingredient in the Brass Monkey sound. Carthy and Kirkpatrick were agreed that the electric bass and drums rhythm section had superimposed an inflexible style on most folk-rock. John told Southern Rag in 1983: "We both like percussion a lot, and we thought of trying trombone for bass...playing with Martin Brinsford on percussion...there's such a racket going on with the five of us."

By 1982 when Martin Carthy recorded 'Out Of The Cut' (Topic 12TS426) the possibilities of expanding the trio to a five piece ensemble had already been tried out on a number of gigs. In fact, in early 1983, a fortnight's tour involved—duo dates of Carthy and Kirkpatrick; a trio of Brinsford, Carthy and Kirkpatrick; quartets of the two Martins, Howard and John or Carthy, Evans, Kirkpatrick and Williams and some dates involved all five! Although their individual work suggested much for the ensemble, those who had not been fortunate enough to attend any of the

sporadic live appearances were probably unprepared for the majestic power of the debut album. Recorded at Livingston Studios in North London with producer Jerry Boys, 'Brass Monkey' is an enormously exciting set. The material unites fresh and exciting arrangements with a passionate commitment to traditional song. Martin Carthy has spoken often of the strength of folk song, its ability to withstand all manner of re-arrangements: "The thing that is so extraordinary about folk song is that it is timeless. It actually speaks to people now as loud and clear as it ever did."

'Brass Monkey' was greeted with universal praise and was well placed in critic's year-end polls. Due to the difficulties in earning sufficient fees to support a large group on the folk circuit, and the members' individual hectic work schedules, Brass Monkey as a band continued to appear only sporadically. It was to be a full three years before the release of their second album—'See How It Runs'. Due to his many other work engagements Roger Williams had gradually relinquished his place in the band to Richard Cheetham, another well-known trombonist in London theatre orchestras, and a noted sackbut player in Early Music circles. Where 'Brass Monkey' had captured the ensemble's live repertoire onto vinyl, 'See How It Runs' was largely a collection of newly rehearsed pieces. In a recent interview Martin Brinsford remembered the recording of the second record as a little nerve-wracking—"We each came along with suggestions for the band to play; as I remember it now, we'd learn a song one day and record it the next." 'See How It Runs' garnered praise equal to the earlier recording.

Brass Monkey finally dissolved in 1987—unable to juggle the demands of each musician's schedule and

acquire enough gigs to support the band. The recorded legacy of the two albums collected on this compact disc remind us just what an enormous loss to the British folk world that was. John Kirkpatrick still regards the band as "a dream come true" and Martin Carthy speaks with sadness of the group's demise—"Brass Monkey was a great idea, a phenomenal experience playing with the brass and John K., a blast. It was a great idea and it worked really well but it became impractical. The best we

could do was to leave while it was great."

Let's leave the last word to legendary American multi-instrumentalist David Lindley. In a 1984 interview with Swing 51, Lindley likened their impact to his first hearing bluegrass or Okinawan music—"I heard them at the Cambridge Folk Festival when I played there. When they went on stage, I said 'this is going to be good. Look at the instrumentation.' It was the most exciting thing I'd heard in ten years."

David Suff, May 1993

- 1 WATERMAN'S HORNPIPE* 3.24
- 2 FABLE OF THE WINGS 5.17
(K Christmas pub Libra Music Ltd)
- 3 THE MILLER'S THREE SONS* 4.01
- 4 THE MAID AND THE PALMER* 5.31
- 5 BAD NEWS 3.32
(R Thompson pub Island Music)
- 6 SOVAY* 3.47
- 7 TIP-TOP HORNPIPE/PRIMROSE POLKA* 4.57
- 8 JOLLY BOLD ROBBER* 2.50
- 9 OLD GRENADIER* 3.30
- 10 GEORGE'S SON 4.55
(J Kirkpatrick pub Topic Records Music)
- 11 DA FLOO'ER O' TAFT/THE LASS O' PATIES MILL** 3.00
- 12 THE HANDWEAVER AND THE FACTORY MAID** 4.12
- 13 THE ROSE LAWN QUADRILLE** 3.24
- 14 WILLIE THE WATERBOY** 4.54
- 15 DOCTOR FAUSTER'S TUMBLERS**/THE NIGHT OF TRAFALGAR***/PRINCE WILLIAM** 6.22
- 16 RIDING DOWN TO PORTSMOUTH** 6.26
- 17 TROWIE BURN** 4.14
- 18 THE FOXHUNT** 3.55

*Trad arr Brinsford, Carthy, Evans, Kirkpatrick, Williams pub Looking Glass Music

**Trad arr Brass Monkey pub Topic Records Music

***Thos Hardy/H Evans pub Topic Records Music

