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Postcards (CMCD203) by Cathy Fink & Marcy Marxer

This duo have played for the Queen of Thailand, sung at the White House Easter Egg Roll and been keynote singers at the American Federation of Labour. With such diverse audiences they must have some magic touch. They have and it is talent. They are veterans of the folk circuit and have performed with Tom Paxton, Pete Seeger and many others. On this 12-track album we find out why. 'Long Time Travelling' is a lovely song beautifully performed with an obvious feel for the lyrics and the sound. It is a typical folksong. They then switch to an old style country sound on 'Hopelessly In Love'. I was stunned by this track. It is simple yet complex. Sparse and sung from the heart with minimal accompaniment it is a gem. Listen to it just for the fiddle and you will be rewarded. From this they launch into harmony singing at its best on 'It's the Girl'. This is the like of The Andrews Sisters brought to the twenty first century. As you get into the jazzy delivery they change tempo to excellent effect. Giving the vocals a rest they take up acoustic and electric guitar to take us around the floor on 'Valse a Django' from the pen of Mr Reinhardt. Is there no end to their ability? 'Survivors of the Storm' is a song for the survivors of child assault with lyrics by Tom Paxton. It is a sad story about a terrible blight on modern society but it must be listened to and this pair makes it easy to lend an ear. Another revelation of this release is the use of works by legends of folk that may not be as well known to the general public. One such song is Woodie Guthrie's 'Birds and Ships'. This is a song that I want to play over and over again. It needs a wider audience and the voices of Cathy and Marcy are ideal to bring it to the world. The guitar and whistle arrangement is inspired. 'Mason's Apron' gets a new frill as Cathy takes up her banjo to join guitar and bass on this perennial tune. As if to prove the close link of good country music to folk they present us with Hank Williams' 'A House of Gold'. 'The Speculator' is one of those songs that sounds great but also educates us with a hint of humour. I never heard it before but I am hooked and am wearing it out. The diction and delivery should be the yardstick for all recording stars. A song for singers and true lovers of good songs has to 'Here is the Chorus'. It is like a sung lesson in song writing as it tells us what the chorus is all about – with beautiful humour. It is a fitting end to an album I never wanted to end. This album must be purchased by anyone who even suspects an interest in good music well sung. **Nicky Rossiter**