



Dalziel Diary

Scott and Michelle Dalziel are, perhaps, one of Eastern Iowa's best-kept secrets. The Maquoketa husband and wife folk duo have been performing around the Tri-States for years, have recorded three CDs of original material, performed on KUNI's celebrated Live From Studio 1, and shared the stage with other notable folk artists, yet are still not widely known in Dubuque.

It is not because of any inadequacies in their performance. They have a devoted following of fans everywhere they play, including Hanover Innkeeper, Maurie Grafton, quoted on their web

site as saying, "The Dalziels pack more musicianship, positive energy, and amazing personality into their shows than any two people should have; much less, have enough left over to share."

It is not for lack of playing live, they played nine dates in the short month of February alone. A quick look at their upcoming tour schedule on their web site, however, reveals that the Dalziels travel a lot. They do perform in Dubuque, but it is just one of the many stops on their itinerary. Well Dubuque, you have a chance to catch up with the well-travelled couple Thursday, March 4 at the Busted Lift on Main Street.

It has been quite a while since I have seen the group perform, so in anticipation of the upcoming show, I checked out Diary, their self-produced CD which just came out this fall. Diary, their third release proves to be a collection of beautiful, well-crafted folk/pop songs, lovingly performed and recorded in a straightforward, uncluttered style. Most arrangements include their signature, chiming acoustic guitars with some songs adding Michelle's tasteful hand-drumming or Dave Ollinger's guest appearance on bass.

In every instance, the music serves to propel the strong melodies and highlight the duo's voices. Scott and Michelle both have distinctive voices and sing with a clear, honest style that conveys a real love of performing the songs. When those voices support each other in harmony, it is not surprising their style has been compared to the Indigo Girls.

Like that group, though labeled as folk, Dalziel is really more of a pop group expressing their musical ideas with folk, and with the addition of Michelle's percussion, a world-beat instrumentation. Their experience performing a wide range of pop music has informed their songwriting with melodies that have a comfortable familiarity to them. I especially like track 5, "Most Of The Time" which evokes a Beatles influence.

The songs themselves have a maturity, a sophistication even, while at the same time an open and direct feeling – as if they are expressions of real life experience, in no way invented or affected. At one time labeled as a Christian group – a tag that may have limited their exposure to some listeners – Dalziel write songs that seem to embrace life and express a faith in human possibility.

While some lyrics might reference Christian themes, the music itself carries the message – it never comes off feeling forced. These songs will resonate with those who enjoy music with a Christian message, but will not alienate those whose first reaction might be to dismiss music because of that label. Good songs and heartfelt performances transcend any labels or preconceptions.

Scott and Michelle Dalziel will perform at the Busted Lift, Thursday, March 4. You can check out their performance schedule and hear samples of Diary and their first two CDs, Greater Than I (2000) and Waiting For The Revolution (1998) on their web site, <http://www.dalziel.net/>.

Mike Ironside