

La Bottine Souriante - J'ai Jamais Tant Ri (Mille Pattes MPCD2043)

If you've seen La Bottine live recently, you'll know that their average age has decreased considerably. Gone are stalwarts Yves Lambert and Michel Bordeleau, to be replaced by the accordion and vocals of Pierre-Luc Dupuis and the dancing feet of Sandy Silva (remember her from Kevin Burke's Open House?). The new sound is not so different from the old: a little thinner, perhaps, and the foot percussion is higher in the mix, but it's the same winning combination of comic songs, punchy tunes, and organised chaos that you should all know and love by now. Enough said, right?

Well, not quite. Some of you may want to be reassured that the tunes are still as exciting (they are: French Canadian fiddle classics like The Man With 2 Wives jockey for position with sparkling new tunes such as fiddler André Brunet's Reel Ados). Others may wonder if the songs are up to La Bottine's previous enviable standards (they are: gems recently mined from the rich seam of octogenarian Québécois singers include Le Moine Simon and the title track J'ai Jamais Tant Ri, while La P'tite Boulangère and the jazzed-up Tiguidou Pack-Sack are brilliant recent compositions). You can rest assured that the mish-mash of trad, jazz, funk and fun is as entertaining as ever too. The vocal harmonies are perhaps not quite as rich as before (La Bottine has lost something here), but there are fresh delights to provide compensation.

An exciting new lease of life, then, for one of the very best bands in the business. Satisfaction guaranteed, as always with La Bottine, and the CD is available from www.millepattes.com even if your local shop hasn't got it. Allez-y!