

Matthew Halsall - Fletcher Moss Park (2012)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Cherry Blossom* 2. *Fletcher Moss Park* 3. *Mary Emma Louise* 4. *Sailing Out to Sea* 5. *Wee Lan (Little Orchid)* 6. *The Sun in September* 7. *Finding My Way* Matthew Halsall - trumpet Gavin Barras – bass Nat Birchall - tenor saxophone (1, 2, 3) Lisa Mallett - flute (6) Rachael Gladwin - harp (1, 2, 3, 6) Adam Fairhall - piano (1, 2, 3) Taz Modi - piano (6, 7) Gaz Hughes - drums (1, 2, 3) Luke Flowers - drums (6, 7) Holly Simpson - violin (4, 5) Davinder Singh - violin (4, 5) Adrienne Wininsky: cello (4, 5)

In the small market town of Didsbury, a few miles south of the city of Manchester, lies Fletcher Moss Park. It's a little oasis of exotic greenery that contrasts with the history of the area as a heartland of the Industrial Revolution: it's also a place where trumpeter and composer Matthew Halsall finds comfort and relaxation. Halsall's fourth album, *Fletcher Moss Park* is a fitting acknowledgement of the meditative qualities of the park, an album full of Halsall's beautiful, spacious and spiritual music.

The first three numbers on *Fletcher Moss Park* were recorded in 2010 and feature all of the players from Halsall's previous release, *On The Go* (Gondwana Records, 2011). "Cherry Blossom" is calm, controlled and hypnotic—over Gaz Hughes' brushed drums Halsall and pianist Adam Fairhall both create sparse but lovely solos. Rachael Gladwin's crystalline harp and Barras' arco bass open "Fletcher Moss Park" before Barras shifts to a deep, pizzicato riff to introduce the tune's soft, emotive, groove. "Mary Emma Louise" is a more up-tempo number, Halsall and tenor saxophonist Nat Birchall playing in unison, Barras and Hughes driving the rhythm and Gladwin adding her flowing harp lines.

The following compositions retain the spirituality and beauty of the sextet numbers, although the depth and color which Birchall's tenor added to the earlier tunes is noticeably absent. Instead, there's the lighter, more ethereal sound of the flute and the string quartet.

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The pretty, dream-like, "Sailing Out To Sea" and "Wee Lan" are performed by the string quartet of Holly Simpson, Davinder Singh, Adrienne Wininsky and Barras. Halsall and Gladwin return for "The Sun In September," in company with flautist Lisa Mallett, pianist Taz Modi and drummer Luke Flowers. Mallett's soft, warm, sound gives the tune an ambient mood. "Finding My Way," a quartet performance, features Halsall's most haunting, stripped down solo. There are also hints of his love of dance beats—Flowers' muscular percussion perfectly suits this harder groove.

Fletcher Moss Park doesn't represent a great leap forward for Halsall: it's instantly recognisable as a companion to On The Go, infused with the spirit of John Coltrane and Alice Coltrane, and that's no bad thing. Like its predecessor, Fletcher Moss Park is a delight: a disarmingly charming set that re-affirms the trumpeter's talents. ---Bruce Lindsay, allaboutjazz.com

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