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LAL & MIKE WATERSON (UK)

Re-Issue: Bright Phoebus

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Bright Phoebus, Lal and Mike Waterson's 1972 folk-noir masterpiece, has long been recognised as one of British music's legendary lost records. Following the parting of ways of The Watsons and freed from the strictures of folk orthodoxy, Lal and Mike Waterson's love of words allowed them to serve the needs of their songs in ways that weren't possible when singing already written songs.

Featuring performances from Lal, Mike and Norma Waterson, Martin Carthy, Richard Thompson, Ashley Hutchings, Dave Mattacks, Tim Hart and Maddy Prior, amongst others, the album is now recognised as a forward-thinking benchmark for the genre. Fans include Arcade Fire, Stephen Malkmus, Billy Bragg, Jarvis Cocker, Richard Hawley – the latter two performed the record themselves in 2013 on the *Bright Phoebus Revisited* tour.

Domino are pleased to reissue *Bright Phoebus – Songs By Lal And Mike Waterson* on 4th August, this will be the first time since its release the album will be widely available. Additionally under the supervision of David Suff (Topic/Fledging) and Marry Waterson (daughter of Lal), the album has been remastered from the original tapes.

Alongside the reissue of the original album, there will be a deluxe version containing 12 demos for the album, themselves tinged with their own mythology and previously unreleased. The standard single-disc CD and LP editions replicate the original artwork with lyrics; the deluxe editions of both are double-disc and contain sleeve notes by Pete Paphides.

The origins of *Bright Phoebus* started in 1971, only a few years after the split of The Watsons whose three albums had a profound effect on the folk world. Following the split, and independently of each other, Mike and Lal had started writing their own songs; after Lal moved back to Hull; they started to cultivate these ideas together.

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Not long after, Martin Carthy was visiting for a show, *"We did Hull Art School or something, and then the next morning we went round to visit Lal, and she had all these songs. We sat there listening to them and... now, I knew Lal wrote songs but I had never heard any of them prior to this point. It was extraordinary."* Convinced that these songs needed to be heard by the wider world, Martin alerted Steeleye Span bandmate and former Fairport Convention bassist Ashley Hutchings to their existence. *"I was instantly in tune with what I heard,"* remembered Ashley, *"I found an empathy with the songs, and I really would have fought off anyone to play bass on them."*

Ashley got to work; he contacted Bill Leader and set the whole thing up, along with Richard Thompson and Martin Carthy. All Lal and Mike Waterson had to do was allow themselves to be swept along by the collective will of everyone who had either heard or heard about their songs. And when, at the very end of 1971, it emerged that a homesick Norma Waterson would be returning to join them, the heavens looked to be aligning as never before.

Recorded in a week in the basement of Cecil Sharp House, Mike recalled *"Lal and I dreamed our way through the recordings. It was magic."* Marry, who was eight at the time, remembered her father George describing the sessions as *"a great big party", people just wandered in. Tim Hart and Maddy Prior are on a few tracks because they happened to walk through the door, so they were lassoed in to do some vocals. One poor sod came in to deliver a package and we said, 'Right! You're in! And we stuck some words in front of him and put him in the chorus! He sang away, thank you very much, and then he left!'"*

Despite the anticipation for a new 'Watersons' record, the release of *Bright Phoebus* was viewed with suspicion from the conservative folk community and shortly after, Bill Leader's company went bankrupt and the initial pressing of 2000 LPS soon fell out of print. Since then, the album has become legend, its scarcity not hindering generations of music fans falling for its beguiling atmosphere. Sadly Lal – who passed away from lung cancer in 1998 – never got to see *Bright Phoebus* receive a full re-evaluation. Mike Waterson did, at least, get to enjoy some of backdated acclaim before his death in 2011. But he remained dogged in his belief that none of that mattered. *"You do what you do,"* he insisted. *"And nothing is right to them, and everything's right to you. Who are you making the record for? *You.* If fans like your record, then wonderful. If they don't, well you've made it anyway. Because you love the songs."*