

## **Nell & Jim Band** *Western Sun*

Rich bloodlines intersect and musical currents run deep on *Western Sun* (Whippoorwill Arts, May 29, 2020), the third album from the Nell & Jim Band, fronted by singer-songwriter/flautist Nell Robinson and singer-songwriter/multi-instrumentalist Jim Nunally. *Western Sun*'s overarching theme is migration, and these two well-traveled artists are steeped in the subject.

Nunally's grandfather, who emigrated from Arkansas to California during the Dust Bowl era, taught Jim's dad how to play guitar, and Jim has expertly and passionately carried on the family tradition from his father. Robinson, born in rural Alabama, began performing in the Bay Area at the age of 46, belatedly but ecstatically embracing the musical strains that had beguiled her during her youth.

Robinson and Nunally's combined experiences and vast knowledge of a range of traditional idioms are further enriched and expanded by those of their virtuosic bandmates: string-bass player Jim Kerwin (David Grisman, Jerry Garcia, Yo Yo Ma), drummer/percussionist Alex Aspinall (Chris O'Connell & the Smart Alecks, Silvestre Martinez) and accordionist/keyboard player Rob Reich (Gaucho, Circus Bella).

There's a palpable sense of history coursing through these predominantly original songs, as the collaborators embed their personal histories and experiences into the vast American panorama.

Nunally describes *Western Sun* as "an amalgamation of all these different cultural influences on American music."

Nell adds, "Jim and I are both fascinated by stories and by history. And the most powerful way that interest gets expressed is through our songwriting. The songs on *Western Sun* are tied together with a thread, our visceral response to the backlash about immigrants in this country; it's profoundly disturbing to us. Our families are immigrants, and particularly being West Coast people with roots in the South, we believe so strongly in the beauty of diversity and culture: language, food, music, people bringing things with them from other cultures and making our world more interesting. So a number of the songs on the album—most of them, really—reflect the diverse heritage and ever-changing world in which our music is created."

"The thing that's most important to me about this record," Nunally asserts, "is that I don't think we sound like anybody else. This is a band that's developing its own sound. And I think that comes across on this record."