

Nice to meet y'all...

The Best And The Worst With THE FARMER & ADELE

By Chris Smith

The Farmer & Adele would dearly love to win a music industry Award; ideally two or three, but one (any one really) would do. Not because they have any grandiose view of their own abilities, I found them to be charmingly modest when we met, but because of Ranger Doug Green.

They write songs frequently with the Riders in the Sky and Time Jumpers stalwart and as Keenan Wade (The Farmer) explained "when we're writing at his house I might say 'Hey Ranger Doug, may I use your bathroom?' and he'll say 'Sure, it's down the hall on the left, past all my Grammys' so when he comes to our house I just want to be able to do that to him."

Our meeting in the bar at The Guest House At Graceland had begun with a discussion on whether putting "Draught Guinness" on the outside of the can was actually false advertising because surely the accepted understanding of 'draught beer' means it is poured from a tap, so I knew right from the off this was going to be an interesting experience.

These days what used to be plain and simple Country & Western music now seems to have acquired more sub-genres than organised religion and, to some, The Farmer & Adele's

brand of Cowboy Swing might be seen as an obscure retreat offering sanctuary to lost souls from the past; but let me tell you it is mighty fine, professionally executed entertainment and attracting new young disciples at a rapid rate.

The concept developed from a shared love of those old time radio shows, one take wonders broadcast in front of a live audience with a selection of favourite songs and a sprinkling of comedy. They do in fact have a radio show on Nashville station 650AM WSM. "On The Trail With The Farmer & Adele" which allows them to pay homage to those old cowboy stars and follow different themes using the music – anything from women songwriters, through the tradition of yodelling, to songs about the cowboy's horse. Those shows contain some great old tracks and an impressive depth of music history knowledge; you can find a back catalogue of them on Soundcloud.

Impressed by the slickness of their on-stage dialogue, delivery and movement I asked if it took a lot of rehearsal. "Not really" Grace Adele insisted, "like all acts if something happens spontaneously and the audience respond to it then we might keep it in the show. Sure we'll talk about it and make sure we all know when

and where it fits into what we're doing but we don't spend time going over it....."

".... if it doesn't get the same reaction next time around" Farmer Keenan chipped in "we might decide to drop it."

"Or we might give it one more try" added Grace Adele to nods from The Farmer.

They don't spend an entire conversation finishing each other's sentences but the understanding between them is a key factor in making their live show work. More than just a band of musicians playing tunes on their instruments, (Keenan plays mandolin, Grace acoustic guitar, both share the vocal duties and the line-up is usually augmented by a steel guitar and a stand-up bass), a stage show from The Farmer & Adele is a complete entertainment experience – very much like those old barn dance scenes from favourite television shows and movies.

The pair describe what they do as the best thing in the world because nobody else is doing it but at the same time the worst thing in the world for exactly the same reason; having watched their YouTube clips and seen their stage show I would suggest nobody else could do it – certainly not nearly as well. CMP

