

TILLER'S FOLLY
Buchan Bluegrass
Raincoast 12345

Among the many roots of bluegrass, one of the strongest is the body of Scottish music, fiddle tunes in particular, that came across the Atlantic with the countrymen and ancestors of Bill Monroe. If you listen first to this collection of ten tunes by Bruce Coughlan and his band before reading the liner notes, you may be convinced that these are dyed-in-the-wool kilt-wearing Highlanders taking a crack at bringing Monroe's music back to its ancestral homeland – and doing a reasonably good job of it at that. In point of fact, though, Tiller's Folly (Coughlan, guitar and tenor banjo; Nolan Murray, fiddle; Eric Reed, guitar; Laurence Knight, bass) is based halfway around the globe in British Columbia.

Be that as it may, the title refers to the Scottish county of Buchan, and indeed, while the instrumentation is essentially bluegrass, the arrangements and vocal approach are thoroughly Scottish on a collection of ten tracks that include "Auchenhalrig," "MacPherson's Rant," "The Ballad of John Rae" and, in perhaps the most striking cut on the disc, a spirited version of the classic "Barnyards O' Delgaty." Bluegrass purists may grumble that the banjo parts are relatively sparse and, for the most part, non-Scruggs-compliant, but Coughlan and his crew are good musicians doing a nice job. Forget the musical correctness and just enjoy it for what it is. — JL