

## John Renbourn - A Maid in Bedlam (1977/2004)

Written by bluelover

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1. *Black Waterside* 2. *Nacht Tanz / Shaeffertanz* 3. *A Maid in Bedlam* 4. *Gypsy Dance / Jews Dance* 5. *John Barleycorn* 6. *Reynardine* 7. *My Johnny Was a Shoemaker* 8. *Death and the Lady* 9. *The Battle of Augrham / Five in a Line* 10. *Talk About Suffering* John Renbourn – guitars, vocals Tony Roberts – vocals, flute, recorders, oboe, piccolo Jacqui McShee – vocals Sue Draheim – fiddle, vocals Keshav Sathe – tabla, finger cymbals

A Maid in Bedlam is credited to the John Renbourn Group, not to John Renbourn alone, and that is an important distinction, since this is not another album of Renbourn's acoustic guitar stylings. It really is the work of a group, consisting of Renbourn on guitar and vocals, his Pentangle partner Jacqui McShee on vocals, Tony Roberts on vocals and wind instruments, Sue Draheim on vocals and fiddle, and Keshav Sathe on tabla and finger cymbals. The song list consists of traditional British folk music dating back to the Renaissance, with three instrumentals mixed in with the vocal numbers and one -- the concluding hymn "Talk About Suffering" -- an a cappella performance. The most familiar number to contemporary listeners is likely to be "John Barleycorn," if only because of the Traffic recording, and the Renbourn Group is careful to present a different arrangement with an altered time signature. The arrangements are traditional, with the singers giving the words a madrigal feel. It's true that the tabla is not a traditional British instrument, but as Sathe plays it, it resembles a bodhran enough to get by. Thus, A Maid in Bedlam works as a collection of music that inspired the members of Pentangle in their contemporary folk-rock, played by some members of that band and their associates. ---William Ruhlmann, Rovi

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