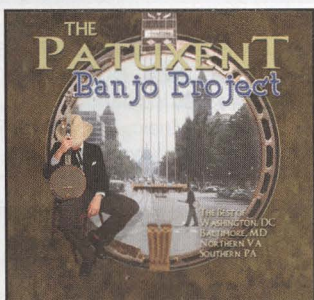


VARIOUS ARTISTS

THE PATUXENT BANJO PROJECT: THE BEST OF WASHINGTON, DC/BALTIMORE, MD/NORTHERN VIRGINIA/SOUTHERN PENNSYLVANIA

Patuxent Music
CD-250



Where to begin? Perhaps it's best to start with an overview of what's here. That would be forty tunes (half are originals; the rest are traditional or covers), one each from forty-two banjo players (two tracks are twin banjo pieces), and thirty-plus guest musicians. As the subtitle says, the banjo players are drawn from an area including D.C., Northern Virginia, Baltimore, and Southern Pennsylvania. Among them are quite a few well-known pickers such as Bill Emerson, Tom Adams, Eddie Adcock, Mike Munford, Cathy Fink, Marcy Marxer, and Mark Schatz. The rest are fine regional musicians, turning in quality performances that stand not far off, if at all, from the best tracks here. The line between Scott Walker's precise and toneful original "Lori Ann" or Victor Furtado's propulsive clawhammer on "The Ghost On Hippie Hill" and one of the better-known players and their tunes is one of small degree.

Bluegrass, from traditional forward, ranges from Dick Smith's cover of "Dear Old Dixie" and Fred Geiger's almost stately reading of "Blue Grass Stomp" to Munford's exuberant take on Berline and Bush's "Hot Burrito Breakdown" and on to contemporary styles such as Marc Bolen's raggy and jaunty "Bolen's Bounce," Gina Clowe's slow waltz "Phoebe's Lullaby," and Adcock's rock-tinged "Cedar City Blues." Nine others fall in the clawhammer/old-time style, and Ira Gitlin's solo original "Allegretto con Melanzane," one of the more interesting and far-reaching tunes here, has roots in nineteenth century classical/parlor tradition. Six of the tunes feature vocals.

No doubt you could, in this age of video and instruction, find similar levels of talent around the country, but it's impressive to hear so many quality banjo players gathered from one region. (Patuxent Music, P.O. Box 572, Rockville, MD 20848, www.pxrec.com.)BW