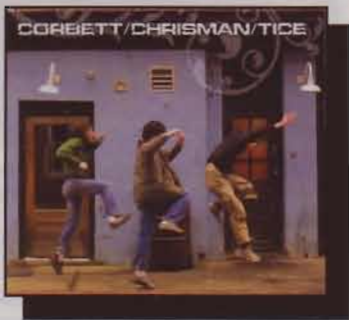


ON THE EDGE - HIGHLIGHT

CORBETT, CHRISMAN & TICE



Patuxent Music CD-164

Dulcimer-driven instrumental newgrass music is what this is, and if the hammered dulcimer's old-time, Appalachian associations make that idea seem odd, then what about the banjo before people such as Adcock, Trischka, and Fleck transformed the five-string into an instrument fit for any music?

Banjoist Wes Corbett, hammered dulcimer man Simon Chrisman, and guitarist Jordan Tice are not the only newgrass ensemble out there driven, at least in part, by the hammered dulcimer. Aaron O'Rourke's mountain dulcimer is at the center of another progressive and

excellent trio with mandolinist Mickey Abraham and guitarist Mike Snelling. Heck, the hard-to-classify rock band, Macha, even uses one to good effect. And, of course, the late David Schnauffer broadened the instrument's terrain and grabbed Mark O'Connor's attention along the way.

Yet, it's still a rarity to see and hear one in a newgrass band, though this compelling album that Corbett, Chrisman, and Tice have forged suggests that plenty of great modern string music is just itching to get hammered out to receptive ears. And if the label of "newgrass" has sent you running in fear of long jams filled with complex rhythms and strange structures, fear not. This stuff is melodic, accessible, direct in its emotional appeal, impressively performed, and perhaps most of all, joyful. All ten pieces are originals by the trio, each ranging from under three minutes to over six, and none meander. This is focused music, the soloing thoughtful yet concise, free of grandstanding or indulgent meanderings. And while the band lacks a bass, their sound is rich and full, with abundant drive when desired.

Corbett, Chrisman, and Tice have hit upon a new sound, but what is most exciting is not the "newness," but the music—which is simply wonderful. (Patuxent Music, P.O. Box 572, Rockville, MD 20848, <www.pxrec.com>.) DR