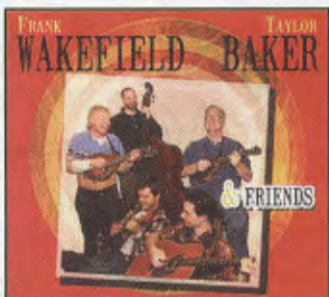


## **FRANK WAKEFIELD, TAYLOR BAKER & FRIENDS**

Patuxent Music  
CD-247



Is it the musicians or the tunes? Is it the performances of mandolinists Frank Wakefield and Taylor Baker that make this recording a comfortable listening experience? Or is it the strength of the 12 classic tunes from our collective musical memory? There is no doubt that tunes such as "Beautiful Dreamer," "Home Sweet Home," "Beer Barrel Polka," "Red River Valley," "Golden Slippers," and six others of the like, have an attraction that most of us find enjoyable, even if we don't want to admit it. They're well-written songs—oft-played, yes...warhorses, yes. That's because they're well-written.

As good as they are, however, to keep us listening repeatedly requires the application of artistry. That's where Wakefield and Baker enter. Wakefield is Wakefield and needs little introduction. His playing still retains the distinctive Wakefield sound. Here, he's at his best on "The Girl I Left Behind Me," but turns in good solo and duet sections all through. Paired with him is Taylor Baker. Where Frank takes the first solo or first mandolin part, Taylor waits his turn. When it comes, he makes the most of it, showing good tone, a fine attention to detail, and a creative bent of his own. As with Wakefield, he plays well all through, but to best understand his abilities, listen for his pedaling take on Wakefield's "Jesus Loves His Mandolin Player #1," one of three originals here.

Together, along with guitarist Brennan Ernst and bassist Stefan Custodi, they create a tapestry reminiscent of the mandolin-craze era of the early nineteenth century, a time when melody was king and tremolos ruled. That doesn't mean they don't stretch out a bit or toss in a hot lick or two. It just means that isn't the aim. Taking classic songs and giving them a boost and making good music; that's the aim and their success. (Patuxent Music, P.O. Box 572, Rockville, MD 20848, [www.pxrec.com](http://www.pxrec.com).)BW