

THE STONEMANS: PATSY, DONNA & RONI

Patuxent Music
CD-183



How long has it been since the pioneering Stoneman sisters recorded together? As their old buddy Charlie Waller might say, "Ages and ages ago." Now, thanks to Tom Mindte at Patuxent Music, we can once again hear these ladies singing and strutting their musical stuff with Patsy on autoharp, Donna on mandolin, and Roni on banjo. Thankfully, the music is not overproduced, nor is the sisters' own playing overshadowed by hot licks. The backup musicians, including Nate Grower and Merl Johnson on fiddles and Jeremy Stephens on guitar, support the stars tastefully, but stay out of the way.

Patsy, ever-faithful to the memory of clan patriarch Pop Stoneman, sings four of his songs including "Sinking Of The Titanic," along with her own autobiographical "Prayers And Pinto Beans." Donna salutes brother, Scott, with the original "Scotty's Bow" and honors her own gospel ministry with "House Of The Lord," "This Little Light Of Mine," and "I Feel Like Traveling On." But it is her mandolin playing that will steal your heart. Her Monroe-inflected style is quirky, fanciful, inventive, and, in a word, delightful, especially on the aforementioned "...Pinto Beans."

Roni steps past her role as Ida Lee Nagger on *Hee Haw!* to get serious while singing "Shackles And Chains" and "I Forgot More Than You'll Ever Know," showing off a fine voice. She also spotlights her banjo playing with a rousing version of Cousin Emmy's "Ruby" and takes the lead on Pop's "Remember The Poor Tramp Has To Live." (With the sisters singing in close trio harmony, this number is one of the best on the CD.)

The music of the Stonemans has taken many twists and turns over the years. The twenty-first century finds these three sisters returning to the sounds they grew up on during the '30s and '40s. I think Pop and Hattie Stoneman would be proud. (Patuxent Music, P.O. Box 572, Rockville, MD 20848, <www.pxrec.com>.)MHH