

FRANK WAKEFIELD OWNSELF BLUES

Patuxent Music
CD-182



Frank Wakefield has been one of the most notable presences on bluegrass mandolin for about fifty years now. His distinctive tone and a musical ear that draws on equal parts Bill Monroe and outerspace are a treasure, and it's been great to see new recordings pop up from him more frequently these past few years.

"Ownself Blues" is an all-instrumental outing, taking him through 11 originals (including

revisiting his contemporary standard "New Camptown Races") plus a pair of tunes by some old-time musicians named Beethoven and Bach. He's joined by a killer band, with Michael Cleveland and Nate Leath on fiddles, banjoist Mike Munford, Jordan Tice and Audie Blaylock on guitars, and bassist Darrell Muller. A group like that would carry anyone to new heights, and Wakefield uses them skillfully. Twin fiddles on a slower version of Bach's classic Bouree and the delicate interplay of mandolin and guitar on the Beethoven track are just a few of the magical moments that stand out on this CD.

The influence of Monroe is pervasive on this album, most notably on the title track and "This Is For Bill," as well as on "The Runaway Train" and "Sabbatical." Wakefield still continues his ability to write twisted tunes and numbers such as "Flying Strings" and "The Old Cat Sneezed" can be seen as almost missing links between traditional bluegrass and newgrass. "Double Stoppin' The Blues" is the kind of piece that takes the essence of Bill Monroe and integrates it into Wakefield's own mandolin "voice." The set ends with "Mandolin Special #2," a composition with classical overtones that's still distinguished by Wakefield's pinched grassy tone.

In a sense, Wakefield is kind of missing link himself, someone as comfortable digging into roots as he is leaning out on the end of branches and still covering new territory. (Patuxent Music, P O Box 572, Rockville, MD 20848, <www.pxrec.com>.)HK