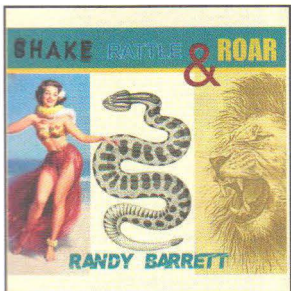


RANDY BARRETT
SHAKE RATTLE AND ROAR

Patuxent Music
CD-339



The range and scope of banjo playing has grown exponentially over the past half century. The root music that Bill Monroe shaped into bluegrass has bloomed and grown like the sport scion that produces new things from the old gene pool. Barrett is that kind of banjo player. He knows his limitations, which aren't many. He plows all the way to the fence to bring us a range of music that is bluegrass, but with many new shades and hues.

Starting off with some fine melodic clawhammer on a couple of originals, Barrett also includes a fine job on the late Eric Weissberg gem "Pony Express." His bluegrass melodic playing is also marked with some fine single string playing. His accompanists are up to matching his level of skill. Nate Leath steps up on fiddle, Danny

Knicey's mandolin is inventive throughout, Tom McLoughlin's guitar is tastefully melodic without the cliches that mark so much lead work on that instrument, and Mark Schatz's bass is an integral voice at all times.

Barrett's sense of irony is fully evident on the last cut, the only vocal, "Walking Boss." This is a Tom Ashley tune with a lineage straight back to the Black banjo tradition. It's cast in full bluegrass mode with some sweet lick trades on the breaks to emphasize the call and response so common in African-American music. The title-cut is a groove-heavy Swing number. Barrett wrote seven of the eleven tracks here and they range from old-time sounding pieces to hot new material.

Throughout the project, the backup musicians shine, taking the tunes to a state of full realization. How many banjo players tackle a waltz? We get a fine reading of "Midnight On The Water." To remind you he knows where it all came from, we also get a fine rendition of Earl's "Nashville Blues." This is first-rate banjo picking. (Patuxent Music, P.O. Box 572, Rockville, MD 20808, www.pxrec.com.)RCB