

RUSS CARSON
AVENUE OF THE GIANTS

Patuxent Music
CD-256



One thing is for sure, Russ Carson and his guests—bassist Jason Moore, guitarist Kenny Smith, and his former Redline bandmates Audie Blaylock, Jesse Brock, and Patrick McAvinue—really have that chugging, popping, uptempo groove down cold. They let you know it by using it, essentially, on the first four tunes of Carson's debut recording, most notably on their cover of Tony Trischka's "New York Chimes" and the old-time fiddle and clawhammer banjo (with band support) tune "Charlie's Neat." Both of those really go.

Carson, now with Ricky Skaggs, has a highly-propulsive, forward-leaning approach, or as Tom Adams says "right at the edge of the music where they reach out and insist that you become part of the music..." Of the other two in the opening four, "Things In Life," the Don Stover tune sung here by Eddie Rose, stands out as a winner, though the lead voice was mixed a bit low.

Carson and his guests return to that groove several more times in the course of the album, including on "Pat Made Me Do It" and "Avenue Of The Giants," both Carson instrumental originals, and on "Montana Cowboy," which has some slightly strained lead vocals from Blaylock, but which also has a lot of entertaining grit to it. The two medium tempo songs, both sung by Darrell Webb are solid enough. Everyone gets in some good licks, and the beat is strong. They are, however, not overly distinctive songs. Better is the cover of the slow country "Letters Have No Arms." The slight Spanish touch gives it an attractive flavor and contrast. Better still is the fretless and tubby banjo duet with McAvinue's fiddle on "New River Train," transformed here into nearly a new tune, with only hints of the melody here and there. Along with "New York Chimes" and "Charlie's Neat," it highlights a fine debut showcase of Carson's banjo skills. (Patuxent Music, P.O. Box 572, Rockville, MD 20848, www.pxrec.com.)BW