



## Album Review of Yesterday and Tomorrow The Country Gentlemen Tribute Band



**Written by Joe Ross**

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Bluegrass fans may recall that Bill Yates, who played bass with the Country Gentlemen from 1969 – 1989, formed a band in 2005 called “Bill Yates and Friends” to perform Country Gentlemen songs. Featuring lead vocals of Mike Phipps who has a voice remarkably like the late Charlie Waller, other band members included Darren Beachley (guitar), Kevin Church (banjo), Dave Propst (mandolin), Mark Clifton (resophonic guitar) and Terry Pearson (bass). In 2006 and 2009, they recorded a couple volumes of their “Country Gentlemen Tribute” albums (on the Mastersfield label).

**Label:** Patuxent

**Genres:** Bluegrass

**Styles:** Contemporary Bluegrass

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The band has evolved over the years into what is now known as The Country Gentlemen Tribute Band with Phipps (guitar), Beachley (Dobro), Propst (mandolin), along with Lynwood Lunsford (banjo), Geoff Gay (Dobro) and Eric Troutman (bass). Bill Yates, Mark Clifton and Rick Briggs appear on the closing cut, “Legend of the Dogwood Tree.” The album’s engineer Tom Mindte adds in bass vocals on “How Great Thou Art.” Now on the Patuxent Music label, these musicians continue to reinforce the great impact that the seminal material of The Country Gentlemen had on many subsequent bluegrass units. Songs like “Teach Your Children,” “God’s Coloring Book,” “Sea of Heartbreak” and “Mountains and Memories” are certainly nostalgically soothing material from the original Gents’ repertoire. The Tribute Band also sources songs never performed or recorded by The Country Gentlemen but that are an excellent fit and very well could have been. To date, this album peaked at #38 on The Roots Music Report’s Weekly Top 50 Contemporary Bluegrass Album Chart.

The album opens with Propst’s self-penned “Miner’s Child” that expands upon the plot, theme and storyline of The Gents’ “Mother of a Miner’s Child.” Other songs that fit the bluegrass repertoire like a pair of old shoes include “Appalachia 1975,” “A Fool Such As I,” “One Tin Soldier,” “Misty Mountain Rain,” “You Can’t Go Home (Charlie’s Lament)” and “Legend of the Dogwood Tree.” The latter song explains the role of the dogwood in the crucifixion of Christ, and how its appearance was forever changed.

Interestingly, the band chose to record “Riders in the Sky” just as an instrumental. Another instrumental, Lynwood Lunsford’s “The Eddie Swing” appears as a tribute to legendary banjo-player Eddie Adcock. The entire album successfully captures and recreates the former pioneering band’s historic sound and psyche with elements of smooth and popular folkish, countrified bluegrass that tells stories. Mike Phipps provides the solid vocalizing reminiscent of Charlie Waller’s. The Country Gentlemen Tribute Band’s *Yesterday and Tomorrow* album conveys enthusiasm, excellence and respect for an iconic sound and legacy of an inspiring ground-breaking bluegrass group. (Joe Ross, Roots Music Report)

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