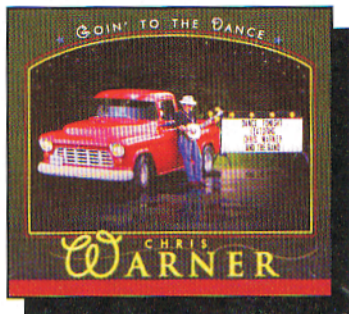


HIGHLIGHT

CHRIS WARNER GOING TO THE DANCE



Patuxent Music CD200

Chris Warner is a force of nature on the banjo. A graduate of the Jimmy Martin school of higher bluegrass learning, Warner is all about timing. With that comes a heavy dose of control. Things never get out of hand, which doesn't mean they don't get exciting. From Tom Adams' fine lead vocals to Warner's powerhouse banjo picking, we are treated to lots of excitement.

There are two fiddlers on this project. Michael Cleveland and Patrick McAvinue. Both tend toward the inflammatory side, but are held in check here to sizzle without going over the top. Their tone and licks are amazing and tasteful throughout. Warner wrote ten of the fourteen pieces here. There are two traditional pieces (both fiddle tunes) and a Jimmy Martin/Paul Williams

classic, "Leavin' Town." While leading the proceedings with his banjo, Warner plays more of a supporting role vocally by adding baritone to the trios. It is only on "Banjo Blues" that Chris sings lead. This cut reaches back to the mountains and to banjo players like Roscoe Holcomb. The title cut shows what makes Warner's playing so good. He twines the mandolin and when they break into "Cotton Eyed-Joe" at the end of the song, the banjo and fiddle burn down the barn.

The vocals here are top notch. Tom Adams and Darren Beachley get in a couple of great duets. The trios are classic bluegrass. "Taxes, Troubles, And Heartaches" is a Carroll Swam original. Mark Seitz's tenor and mandolin stand out with Swam's warm lead vocal and Warner's great baritone. The instrumentals are consistently interesting and well played.

There are gems throughout the project, such as Dick Laird's break on "Bonaparte's Retreat." There is a touch of old-time (Warner uses an old-time banjo tuning to good effect on "Bonaparte's Retreat"), a pinch of country, and a whole lot of great bluegrass on this CD. The performances here will stand the test of time. This is an essential addition to the collection of any fan of traditional bluegrass and bluegrass banjo. (Patuxent Music, P.O. Box 572, Rockville, MD 20848, <www.pxrec.com>.)RCB