

and that's too long a time not to hear new material from Kathy and the band. She is one of the best songwriters in bluegrass and acoustic music - always coming up with interesting, sometimes playful, always sure-handed songs. But this is primarily a band album, one with true ensemble sensibilities - a full set (14 songs) of originals, a couple of instrumentals and some standards.

The band has gone through a few changes (as all bands do), and in addition to longtime band member Tom Bekeny on mandolin and vocals, Kathy has added young fiddler Annie Staninec and a father/son team of Dan Booth on bass and Greg Booth on banjo and Dobro; with some fiddle added by part-time member Chad Manning, it's a wonderful combination of youth and experience. It feels like they're very comfortable playing together and with playing to the song. All are strong musicians - they create a distinctive band sound.

Kathy has written five of the songs here and starts the album off with "Where Is My Little Cabin Home," which sounds like a traditional Flat and Scruggs standard but is a fun take on the cabin song. "White House Blues," with lyrics by Kathy and Peter Thompson about the Bush administration, also updates an old classic. But Kathy's strength of conversational yet evocative lyrics is on best display when she's speaking directly without any wink, as in "The Snow" and "Whistle Stop Town," my favorite in this collection.

Very nicely packaged and designed, with lyrics printed in a booklet. For those interested in great songwriting and solid bluegrass sensibilities, a release by the Kathy Kallick Band is always a must listen. — CS

RICKY SKAGGS

Mosaic

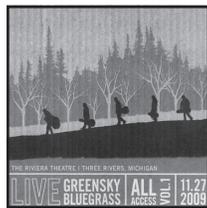
Skaggs Family 1010

Since appearing at the age of seven on the Flatt and Scruggs television program, Ricky Skaggs has been through a lot of life and career stages. After a stint as a teen sensation (along with childhood friend Keith Whitley) in Ralph Stanley's Clinch Mountain Boys, he became an integral part of Emmylou Harris' legendary Hot Band. Embarking on his own solo career, he garnered considerable renown and praise - deservedly - as one of the "young Turks" (with George Strait and Randy Travis) who spearheaded the revival of traditional country music in the 1980s.

The past decade has also seen Skaggs start up his own record label, and while the releases to date have featured plenty of

hardcore, traditional 'grass, he's also made Skaggs Family a home for bluegrass acts (Cherryholmes and Mountain Heart, to name a couple) that have incorporated more progressive elements into their music. Though he's recorded plenty of Gospel music in the past, *Mosaic* finds him expressing that faith in an entirely new direction - and with an entirely new look, including cover photos of him sporting shaggy, graying, shoulder-blade-length hair. In short, after 50 years of being the "Country Boy" of one of his early hits, Ricky is finally letting his "inner hippie" emerge.

The production (by Skaggs and Gordon Kennedy, who wrote or co-wrote all the songs) and arrangements, however, are exquisite, and by Skaggs' own admission, they are strongly influenced by The Beatles - it does have an overall *Let It Be* feel, to be sure. Though not stridently evangelical, these are songs of faith, and Skaggs delivers them with complete and utter sincerity. It may or may not be "folk" music, but this is a Ricky Skaggs we've never seen or heard before. — JL



GREENSKY BLUEGRASS
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Big Blue Zoo

Greensky Bluegrass stormed on to the jam-band scene following its 2006 win at Telluride. This two-CD set was recorded live at the Riviera Theatre in Three Rivers, Michigan, and holds two-and-a-half hours of nonstop music from two sets. The group - Anders Beck on Dobro, Michael Arlen Bont playing banjo, Dave Bruzza handling guitar, Mike Devol behind the upright bass and Paul Hoffman picking mandolin - covers some 26 cuts.

Nifty licks add pizzazz to classic-sounding originals, which comprise the majority of the material, mostly penned by Hoffman, with Beck, Bont and Bruzza checking in as well. They come off confident, if not slightly rough-hewn, and thoroughly enjoyable, as it is evident that they, too, are having fun.

Original standouts include "Against the Days" and "Dry County," while "Break Mountain Brokedown" and "Tied Down" provide a 15-minute encore. Beck's Dobro work is particularly refreshing.

"Hot Dogs (On Parade)," an instrumental by Bruzza, is distinctive, an excellent showcase. Bont sparkles on his full-bodied, lilting banjo piece "Indian Trail." Several cuts break into jams of roughly 10 to 15 minutes in length each, some featuring electronic toying.

Pink Floyd's "Time-Breathe Reprise" becomes an innovative production, wrapped in a progressive bluegrass arrangement. Dylan's "When I Paint My Masterpiece" is transformed into classic bluegrass, while the Lennon-McCartney opus "A Day in the Life" is fairly straightforward, albeit à la bluegrass instrumentation. They barrel down the road with Townes Van Zandt's "White Freight Liner Blues," while Bruce Hornsby's "King of the Hill" is also tackled.

A noisy audience is evident, but the band's exuberance, for the most part, overcomes this distraction. Virtually all stage narrative has been edited out and lyrics, unfortunately, are difficult to discern at times. However, the quintet's driving energy more than makes up for any shortcomings. Refreshing and sure to please. — SPL

PETER OSTROUSHKO

When the Last Morning Glory Blooms

Red House 231

Peter Ostroushko's music has been a big part of my life for many years. From his days as a sideman with Robin and Linda Williams to his regular stint on *A Prairie Home Companion* and his numerous solo recordings, his music has always been of the very highest quality. His latest, the instrumental collection *When the Last Morning Glory Blooms*, is one of his best.

In the same manner as his friend Norman Blake, who incidentally appears on this CD, Peter has adopted a much more relaxed mandolin and fiddle style. The CD opens with "Maycomb, Alabama," a tune written in homage to the "tired old town" that features so prominently in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The combination of Peter's mandolin and Pat Donohue's slide guitar depict the sleepy southern town where the story takes place.

The title track, up next, is dedicated to Peter's favorite flower. Again, the mandolin melody is simple and, along with Rich Dworsky's piano and Sarah Lewis's cello, portrays the melancholy image of the last morning glory of the late fall.

Peter has written many wonderful waltzes, but here he has chosen to include "The Nine Years Waltz," written by his fellow musicians Norman and Nancy Blake,