

The Lee Stripling Trio

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LST-001

Lee Stripling: fiddle, guitar, mandolin, vocals; W.B. Reid: guitar, mandolin, fiddle, vocals; Bonnie Zahnow: fiddle, guitar, vocals; Tony Mates: tenor vocal.

Cool Water/Roundup Time in Texas/Is It True What They Say About Dixie?/Tumbling Tumbleweeds/Flor De Las Flores/Birmingham Jail/Hen Cackled/We Three/Goofus/Johnson's Old Grey Mule/Sentimental Man from Georgia/Coal Mine Blues/Faded Love/Riding Down the Canyon/Let The Rest of the World Go By/The Lost Child/Scatterbrain/Winging My Way Back Home/Goodnight Waltz

This is a wonderful CD. The one-sentence blurb on the back says the contents are "Classic Western Swing Trios with Twin Fiddling Plus Old-Time Music from Alabama," a statement reminiscent of the Da-Costa Woltz stationery that described that band's music as "Instrumental Music Suitable For Every Occasion, Vocal - Old Time Southern Melodies." Both are accurate descriptions, while incidentally showing us the many faces of old-time music.

Old-time music *aficionados* will already be familiar with the name Stripling from the classic recordings of the Stripling Brothers made in the 1920s and 1930s, collected on Document 8007 and 8008. Charlie Stripling's son Lee learned fiddle from his father but was "bitten by the Western Swing bug while still a teenager," and only around 1985 started re-learning the tunes he grew up with. Lee met W.B. Reid and Bonnie Zahnow as a result of Joyce Cauthen's 1989 book on Alabama fiddlers, *With Fiddle and Well-Rosined Bow*. Cauthen had interviewed Robert Stripling, who lives in Birmingham, Alabama, and he mentioned to her that his brother Lee was living in Seattle. Through a sequence of events involving a basement swing tune session at a party (in the formidable key of Bb), W.B. and Bonnie began playing music with Lee Stripling. Eventually they made this CD to share with the rest of us.

The "Classic Western Swing Trios with Twin Fiddling" include "Cool Water" and "Tumbling Tumbleweeds" from the Sons of the Pioneers, "Faded Love" from Bob Wills, and "We Three" from the Ink Spots—yes, the Ink Spots! If, like me, you are most comfortable playing I, IV, and V chords you will find your mind considerably stretched by the harmonies these three sing. Though the songs are very enjoyable to listen to without trying to deconstruct the harmonies, one should still not lose sight of how much effort went into getting it right and blending three good voices. Fellow OTH reviewer Tim Woodbridge once sang me "Riding Down the Canyon" and prefaced it by saying "You've never heard this song before, but you'll know it." He was right. You'll recognize it, from co.W.B.oy movies on TV, and I bet you will like it.

The "Old-Time Music from Alabama" portion is mostly Lee ably playing tunes he learned from his father such as "The Lost Child," "Coal Mine Blues," "Hen Cackled," and "Johnson's Old Grey Mule." The last was not recorded by the elder Striplings but as Lee says, "they played it." Interestingly, "The Lost Child" appears here with Lee on mandolin and W.B. on fiddle. W.B. has the Alabama fiddle sound down so well that I only realized who was playing what on re-reading the liner notes for this review. That's also W.B. fiddling on "Johnson's Old Grey Mule."

My only complaint about this CD is that after hearing it and reading the liner notes, I feel that I now know a lot about Lee Stripling but very little about W.B. Reid and Bonnie Zahnow. There are three good musicians on this CD, and I'd like to know more about the rest of the Lee Stripling Trio. I do know enough, however, to give this an unqualified recommendation. Buy this!

PETE PETERSON

To order: www.W.B.andbonnie.com