



**Laurie Lewis**  
**Skippin' And Flyin'**  
Spruce And Maple

Lewis is a spectacular singer, fiddler, guitar player, and songwriter who began to record in the mid 1970s. Her latest release comes hard on the 100th anniversary of the birth of her musical guru, Bill Monroe. Lewis' deep commitment to mining the rich vein opened by Monroe, the Carters, Jimmie Rodgers, and other antecedents makes for music that is faithful to their spirit yet enjoyably and enthusiastically fresh sounding.

Using traditional bluegrass instrumentation of guitars, banjo, bass, fiddle, and mandolin, Lewis isn't trying to break new musical ground. She's operating within a still vital tradition; this ain't "newgrass." Her warm, strong alto voice grips the heart on her original "The Pharaoh's Daughter" to

reflect her emotional commitment as well as the stylistic one. The song came to Lewis after listening to the Carter Family's "Little Moses" and wondering about the fate of the woman who rescued that prophet from the waters of the Nile. In the song's opening, Lewis' guitar intro quotes the Carters' iconic "Wildwood Flower," with Craig Smith doing likewise with banjo fills later on. Lewis moves from guitar to fiddle for "Hartfordtown 1944," and there and throughout the album she is ever conscious of the overall presentation.

There's very little showing off here, but there's a great deal of superior musicianship. Even bass player Andrew Conklin's break in Jimmie Rodgers' "Tuck Away My Lonesome Blues" is not about how fast and tricky he can play but about what will make the song shine best. It's a principle that's in play from the first cut to the last. — **RA**