

Sing Out!

FOLK MUSIC - FOLK SONGS

AMY GALLATIN AND STILLWATERS
Phoenix
Happy Appy 7

AMY GALLATIN AND
ROGER WILLIAMS
Something 'Bout You
Happy Appy 6

A native of Alabama, Amy Gallatin's career path as a folk/bluegrass singer and songwriter over the last two decades has passed through Idaho, on the way to her current base in New England where in the last few years she has teamed up professionally and personally with the superlative Dobro artist Roger Williams; their shared affinity for their country and bluegrass backgrounds is on display on these two fine releases. Familiar to many bluegrass fans through his work with Northeast-based bands like Southern Rail and White Mountain Bluegrass, Williams isn't quite the household name on his instrument as, say, Jerry Douglas or Mike Aldridge, but resophonic aficionados will quickly tell you that he's easily in the same league. His powerful, driving style incorporates a lot of the classic country elements popularized by predecessors like Josh Graves, Brother Oswald, Deacon Brumfield and even as far back as Cliff Carlisle. And, as demonstrated on both of these discs, he's a more than capable vocalist.

With a clear, true voice that's well suited to bluegrass, Gallatin works her way through a variety of material on *Phoenix*, from Hank Williams ("Baby We're Really In Love") to traditional fare like "The Water Is Wide," as well as more contemporary material from the likes of David Mallett ("Somewhere In Time"), Tanya Savory ("40, 80 or 10") and Marie and Sheila Burns ("Dance Upon This Earth"). Stillwaters has been her band of the last several years, and in addition to Williams the vocal core of the current lineup is bassist John Urbanik, making for a nice trio sound.

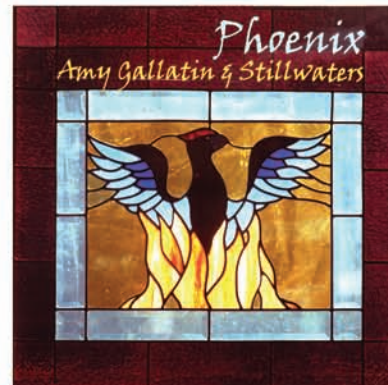
Where *Phoenix* is the sort of spirited bluegrass that might be heard on stage at any of the hundreds of festivals across the country, *Something 'Bout You* is more like what you'd hear if you slipped out the back door of the Ryman Auditorium to Tootsie's Orchid Lounge, or any of the other smoky joints along Nashville's Broadway. Gallatin and Williams join up for duet turns on classic country songs of love and heartache ranging from Roy Acuff's "Tear Stained Letter" to the Everlys' "So Sad (To Watch Good Love Go Bad)," with stops along the way for Gene Autry ("Old Pal Of Yesterday"), Melba Montgomery ("Will There Ever Be Another") and more. The backup cast includes sterling harmony work by Kathy Chiavola, and it wouldn't be a "country" album without John Heinrich's pedal steel counterpoint to Williams' Dobro. Both of these albums are cleanly and intelligently produced, and they are a lot of fun to listen to. — JL

BLUEGRASS

• UNLIMITED •

AMY GALLATIN & STILLWATERS
PHOENIX

Happy Appy Records
HAR-7



Amy Gallatin has toured extensively from her Connecticut base as a bandleader and singer for many years. "Phoenix" shows her and her group, Stillwaters, to have carved out a nice musical niche for themselves. With her core band of resonator guitarist Roger Williams and bassist John Urbanik, and rounded out on this recording by Dave and Bob Dick, mandolinist Ben Pearce, and fiddler Mike Barnett, Gallatin adds her crystalline voice and fine ear for a song.

While Williams contributes a handful of lead vocals and two songs and an instrumental that he wrote himself, Gallatin and Stillwaters have managed to pull together a collection of cover material from a wide variety of sources and managed the delicate balance of being both cohesive and eclectic. There is arguably only one song that has had recognition elsewhere, that being "Like I Used To Be," recorded both by the Seldom Scene and the song's co-author, Tim O'Brien. And even so, it benefits from being sung from a woman's perspective. Otherwise, a fine range of songs is drawn from the pens of a broad array of sources and genres, including country by way of Hank Williams ("Baby We're Really In Love") and Buck Owens, pop via Richard Marx, and folk through the Burns Sisters, David Mallett, and Tanya Savory.

Gallatin's voice is obviously well-trained, lending an effortless purity to her delivery of each song. This combined with her willingness to feature her band, and the often overlooked instrumental wizardry and versatility of Roger Williams and Dave Dick, allows the collective sound of Stillwaters to be exceptionally full and polished. Some bands that fall into the marketing niche of "regional" get passed over by the larger bluegrass audience, but "Phoenix" is proof that this is a group deserving a listen from all. (Amy Gallatin, P.O. Box 313, Glastonbury, CT 06033, <www.amygallatin.com>.)HK