

HIGHLIGHT

THE FEINBERG BROTHERS



Ampersand Records 0315

The Northeast has been home to some fairly impressive bluegrass brother groups through the years, notably the Lilly Brothers with Don Stover and, of course, the Gibson Brothers with their impressive string of superb albums and awards that just keep coming. Now, from Long Island, the Feinberg Brothers (Rourke and Patrick) have released their self-titled debut CD, and while comparisons to the aforementioned groups would be unfair, they have certainly done an excellent job on their first release.

For a young band (Rourke was 18 and Patrick was 17 at the time of this recording), this group shows great taste and a strong sense of what makes great bluegrass music. Joined by their father, Ronnie, on guitar, Terry McGill on banjo, and Peter Elegant on bass, Rourke

(fiddle) and Patrick (mandolin) handle the lead and tenor vocals with occasional baritone by Ronnie. The highlight throughout this release is the fine harmony singing by the Feinbergs. The band wastes no time showing what they can do here. By the end of the second cut, it's clear they can go fast, crisp, and tight (as on the opening "I Do" from Peter Elegant), and they can do slow and very, very soulful (Ronnie Feinberg's fine "Bury Me On A Mountain"). Not only are the vocals tight and sweet, but the entire group is as solid as can be, with sparkling banjo work by McGill and excellent rhythm from Ronnie and Elegant, and equally good work by Rourke and Patrick. An illustrative example of the ability of this group is Jim & Jesse's "Drifting And Dreaming," a challenging number on which they succeed on all fronts, with vocals that would do Jim & Jesse proud, and fine cross-picking by Patrick and fiddle fills by Rourke. Among the other highlights are Jimmy Martin's "Hi-Dee Diddle," "The Cotton Farmer," Ronnie Feinberg's "Bergold's Farm," "Kentucky Is Only A Dream," and "Arkansas."

In addition to fine vocal and instrumental abilities and the good taste to choose material that allows them to shine, the arrangements are top-notch. The result is traditional bluegrass with the soul of yesteryear and the technical ability that would be hard to equal. Highly recommended. (Cabinwood Music, 104 Lawrence Ave., Hasbrouck Heights, NJ 07604, www.feinbergbrothers.com.)AW