



Various **"Front Porch Pickin' – 24 Great Bluegrass Instrumentals"** Rural Rhythm Records

Uncle Jim O'Neal opened the doors of the California based Rural Rhythm label in 1958, with the aim of preserving ethnic acoustic music. According to the liner, the two dozen selections featured here date from the sixties. Sadly the liner fails to detail the source of these recordings which vary in length from 66 seconds through to 2 minutes 39 seconds. Overall the disc lasts just over forty minutes, with twenty of the tracks running out at less than two minutes duration. Of the contributors featured I can only claim to have a prior knowledge of Vassar Clements, a Nashville session stalwart for four decades. The *Isaac Stern of country music*, they say. The other featured pickers include Raymond Fairchild, Bob Ensign, Clarence Jackson, Earl Taylor, Jim McCall, DeWayne Wear and the curiously named Fiddlin' Mutt Poston. "Raymond's Repeating Banjo" by Raymond Fairchild features shades of a melody popularised by Eric Weissberg in the movie **"Deliverance"** [1972]. It seems to me that in bluegrass music it's always *competition time*, as each picker attempts to cram more notes into each passing second than anyone else. There's great merit in slowing things down a bit, and giving the melody the opportunity to shine through, as in Messrs. Jackson and Poston's rendition of the standard "Wabash Cannonball." Lesser known tunes far outweigh the well known ones here, and elsewhere on this collection you'll find favourites such as "Wildwood Flower," "John Hardy" and "Home Sweet Home." This disc is strictly for hardcore bluegrass aficionados, and the Rural Rhythm catalogue features many other, similar Fiddle, Banjo, Old-Timey, Gospel and Bluegrass collections that will keep you amused and enthralled for the remainder of your life.....

Folkwax Rating 5 out of 10

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