

**Steve and Ruth Smith** - reviews include performance, CD's, and teaching

### **Performance Reviews**

"We have had many different kinds of music here in our past few years, but the audience was the most attentive that I have ever seen. Other than the music, you could have heard a pin drop and it stayed that way for the entirety of Steve and Ruth's musical journey with us. The music was so magical everyone was completely mesmerized . . . some humorous stories, a lot of fantastic music, and some wonderful warmth and fellowship with these two. It was a sweet ride, perhaps one of the sweetest ever offered here at South by Southeast. Our audience was completely in awe. I would love to see these guys back again, anytime!" —*David Catton Johnson, South by Southeast Music Fest, Myrtle Beach, SC*

"Beautiful music! Thanks!" — *Ted Hagaman, Festival Director, MerleFest, Wilksboro, NC*

"Your music is so original, yet so traditional to the mountains and its Celtic roots. I can't say when we've had so many wonderful comments from the audience. The harmony in your music and your lives is so evident in your performance and exhibits what's best in our home spun 'mountain' music - peace, tranquility, and a real connection to our roots and our community." —*John Buchanan, Park Director, Valle Crucis Concert Series, Valle Crucis, North Carolina*

"Steve and Ruth are a performing and recording power house. Their music is beautifully arranged and performed and they're among the best and busiest ambassadors we have for hammered and mountain dulcimer." —*Dan Landrum, Editor, Dulcimer Players News*

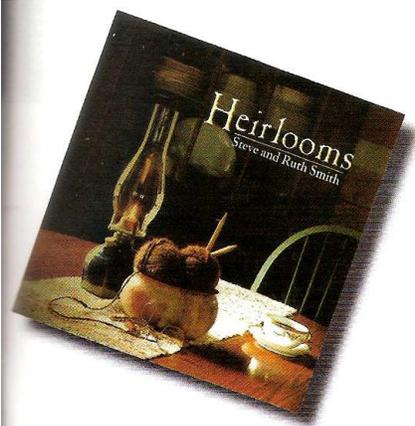
### **CD Reviews:**

#### ***Heirlooms***

"***Heirlooms*** is a spirited collection of fine songs and beautiful hammered dulcimer tunes." —*David Holt, renowned Appalachian musician and storyteller*

"Absolutely Magical" —*Dirty Linen World and Folk Music Magazine*

Lush and expressive . . . a work on par with John Denver's songs . . . memorable and heart-felt " — *Bill Troxler, Dulcimer Players News (see full review below)*



## Heirlooms

Steve and Ruth Smith

a review by Bill Troxler

**H**eirlooms is the perfect title for this recording of songs of family, faith, and the old home place.

Steve and Ruth Smith have created yet another expressive recording that offers a mix of original and traditional melodies. The theme of this fourteen track recording centers on the power

family heirlooms have to remind us that who we are today is constantly reshaped by the way we interpret our heritage. Listeners will be swept away by Ruth's lush and expressive hammer dulcimer performances throughout the recording. Whether she is backing up Steve's persuasive vocals or delivering her beautiful solo in her composition "High Mountain Heather," Ruth's clear, flowing style always modulates to create the perfect mood for a piece. Steve wrote or co-wrote nine of the tracks on the recording. He is a master storyteller and the perfect vocalist to convey the meaning of the lyrics. His song "Along this Old Crooked Road" stands out for its imagery and melodic strength. This is a work on par with John Denver's songs about the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains. Steve and Ruth's joint composition "Homesick for the Holler" is a haunting melody showcasing Ruth's hammer dulcimer and Steve's old time banjo within a modal context that evokes the mood of the southern Appalachian Mountains.

Listeners eager for traditional melodies will be pleased by "Shady Grove," "Swingin' on a Gate," and the "Where the

Soul Never Dies." Steve and Ruth's performances on hammer dulcimer, mountain dulcimer, guitar and banjo are supported by Nancy Schneeloch-Bingham on flute, Cecil Gurganus on fiddle, and Ryan Smith on percussion. Heirlooms is a wonderful recording in which, at long last, we get to hear Steve and Ruth's fine vocal work alongside their instrumental performances. This memorable, heart-felt recording is a worthy addition to any collection of traditional music.

*Track List: Smile and Take the Sunshine by the Hand; My Grandpa's Watch; Blue Ridge Mountain Sky; High Mountain Heather; Shady Grove; Love is Made of Little Things; Along This Old Crooked Road; Homesick for the Holler; Where the Soul Never Dies; Heirlooms; Swingin' on a Gate; Grass Roots Music; Thank You for My Wife; Lovers' Waltz*

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## An Appalachian Winter

If you liked *A Winter's Solstice*, you'll love **An Appalachian Winter**—CDBaby Customer

"**An Appalachian Winter** is just what you'd expect to hear in a fireside gathering among friends. This is such a personal project — the listener feels as if he or she has been given a very special gift in this thoughtful and skilled performance." — *Susan Hartman, Dirty Linen Folk & World Magazine*

(Full Review:)

"**Steve and Ruth Smith** live in a cabin in western North Carolina on Snake Mountain, and the music on **An Appalachian Winter** [Cabin Cove CC103 (2008)] is just what you'd expect to hear in a fireside gathering among friends — especially if your friends included Liz Rose on Celtic harp and Nancy Schneeloch-Bingham on flute and pennywhistle. This is music made for the pleasure of making it as much as for the pleasure of listening to it. Steve Smith is a fingerstyle guitarist, and Ruth contributes hammer dulcimer, piano, keyboard, and tunes; she composed three of the 15 instrumentals on this disc. The repertoire is a mix of old and new, with holiday classics mingling with newer compositions. A particularly lovely melody is "Come Before Winter" by the late Jim Taylor, a fellow North Carolinian and hammer dulcimer player. Another resident of the Blue Ridge, Jerry Read Smith, is represented with "One Wintry Night." The Smiths are skilled interpreters: These are not merely pretty melodies with tinkly frills. Ruth Smith's "Winter's Finale" is aptly named, providing the sonic equivalent of the waning light and heavy, wet, slushy snowflakes suggestive of a late February or March storm. The weighty arrangement of "In the Bleak Midwinter" carries just the right emotional heft to suit the mood of its title. This is such

a personal project — the Smiths have been playing together for more than 30 years and they recorded this CD in their home, which is pictured on the cover — the listener feels as if he or she has been given a very special gift in this thoughtful and skilled performance." — *Susan Hartman, Dirty Linen Folk & World Magazine*

**"An Appalachian Winter** . . . the best new acoustic instrumental CD of the season. Steve and Ruth's music is as beautiful as the mountains." —*Dr. Christmas, WRST Radio, Wisconsin Public Radio*

"Beautiful and impressive . . .featuring 15 melodies of some of the finest Christmas music to accompany your holiday festivities and late night Christmas wrapping, **An Appalachian Winter** is sure to be one of your favorite Christmas CDs each and every holiday season. Perfect Christmas music to listen to by the fireplace or as the snow is falling out the window. 5 holiday Celtic Radio stars for "An Appalachian Winter." —*Paul MacArthur, Celtic Radio Music Network, Home of Highlander Radio*

*CDBaby customers:*



"Soothing, lovely and ethereal music for the Christmas season. Over two weeks after Christmas and still listening...just can't yet put it away for next year!" —*E. P.*



"Wonderful selection of traditional and non-traditional carols. If you are looking for something other than the usual Christmas songs and like the hammer dulcimer/folk instruments sound this is an excellent choice." —*T.A.*

". . . gorgeously interwoven, homespun instrumentals, providing beautiful organic colors and earthy textures, lightly tossed with Celtic flourishes." —*Carol Swanson, ChristmasReviews.com*

### ***Dancin 'Cross the Strings***

Review from



Ruth Smith's touch on the hammered dulcimer is absolutely magical, highlighting the range of the instrument, especially on her own pieces, "Dancin' Cross the Strings" and "Mountain Minuet," and Jim Taylor's lovely "Come Before Winter." For "Winter's Finale it could be that she's playing a concert grand as she stretches the notes and then nearly pauses at just the right moments within the exquisite phrasing.

Smith's dulcimer on its own is more than enough, but for the traditional "O'er the Moor to Maggie" when pennywhistle, fiddle and Steve Smith's clawhammer banjo are added, there is a rich, true sound achieved that does fine justice to the piece.

It's hard to imagine anyone not being a fan of the sound of the hammered dulcimer, but those still on the fence will take the final leap over to complete appreciation after listening to this worthy recording.

—*Ellen Geisel*

### Review from



"What do you get when you put together two musicians from the Blue Ridge Mountains with a Scots-Irish background? You get a CD packed with music of Appalachia. Music from this area of the country was brought there by the early settlers, who were -- you guessed it -- Scots-Irish. You'll hear a variety of sounds on this instrumental album, including the hammered dulcimer, guitar, flute, fiddle, bodhran and clawhammer banjo. It makes for a very intriguing "stew" of sound. The overall effect is relaxing and dreamlike--carrying the listener along for the ride. Somewhat like a Celtic "New Age" sound, this CD really would be the perfect accompaniment to a hot mug of tea and a relaxing afternoon spent looking out the window at the world going by. The arrangements here are well done, and although the music is relaxing, it isn't boring or solely background music. The musicianship shows through and begs for the ear and the dulcimer is used in a very gentle way much of the time--blending in and flowing rather than screaming for attention. The effect is quite nice and Ruth's touch is definitely cultivated well. Sit back and relax with this album-- get a little lost in the sound and enjoy..." — *Catherine L. Tully*

"Ruth's delicate yet decisive playing on the hammered dulcimer is one of the things that gives ***Dancin' Cross the Strings*** its lively Celtic character." —*Jeff Eason, The Mountain Times*

"Ruth's shimmering, cascading dulcimer melodies and Steve's warm, finger-style guitar are enhanced throughout the disc by the supporting cast who add depth and emotion to the delicate music." —*David Brewer, High Country Press*

### ***An Appalachian Aire***

Chosen during 2006 by XM Satellite Radio as



"The Best Music This Week on XM"

"Thank you for this wonderful music. What a delight to travel with your ethereal music playing. Thank you for making it possible for me to have a breath of Mountain Aire whenever my soul needs one." —*Martha, Chapel Hill, North Carolina*

"One of our favorite and best selling CDs over the last two years is ***An Appalachian Aire*** by Steve and Ruth Smith. This CD features Ruth's lovely, straight forward hammered dulcimer expertly blended with Steve's accompanying guitar. Flute and pennywhistle add interest on a number of cuts. The disc features beautiful arrangements of Celtic, Appalachian and classical melodies. When customers ask for something flowing, relaxing and melodic we recommend ***An Appalachian Aire***. The fact that this music is made by folks from right here in the high country is also a great plus - our visitors like to take home

some of the mountains." —*Bill and Jewel Magee, The Dulcimer Shop, Blowing Rock, NC*

"Having been given the responsibility of putting together a video presentation touting the ambiance, sights and amenities of Asheville, North Carolina, I immediately gave thought to the music I would use in the presentation. The music had to reflect the best of the area's native sounds, utilizing instruments of the area and reflecting the Scots-Irish influence of its settlers. I was greatly pleased to find a most beautiful collection of music by Steve and Ruth Smith, titled *An Appalachian Aire*. Their talents, the instruments used and the selection of music captured the beauty, dignity and awe of the western North Carolina high country. Their music was the perfect choice. Persons who viewed the presentation absolutely loved it, and the music was certainly part of the reason why." —*Jeff Cloninger, Director of Public Relations and Marketing, Office of Business Affairs, Appalachian State University*

### **Steve Teaching**

"Amazing teacher; very understanding"

"Steve Smith was an excellent ukulele teacher! He brought such special insight into his Hawaiian songs! His handouts and music choices were just right - easy to follow and learn!"

"I've had a uke class with another instructor before - Steve's was much more comprehensive - Thanks!"

"Steve Smith is fantastic. The Hawaiian uke class is just a fun session."

"FUN class - I went from playing 0 chords to 10 chords and could hear chord changes in one week! "

—*Quotes from various ukulele students at 2015 Kentucky Music Week*

### **Ruth**

"Ruth Smith's touch on the hammered dulcimer is absolutely magical, with exquisite phrasing, highlighting the range of the instrument, especially on her own pieces." —*Dirty Linen World and Folk Magazine*

"Ruth's musical expression captures what makes us fall in love with the hammered dulcimer and believe we can play it too!" —*Dan Landrum, Editor, Dulcimer Players News*

"Ruth has an honest, distinctive, pure and deeply passionate style of playing the Hammered Dulcimer. I love how she welcomes the listener to become part of the music rather than just a spectator." —*Jerry Read Smith, Dulcimer luthier*

"Ruth is one of the rarer exceptions in the dulcimer world. She plays with such feeling and expression. Her arrangements are a mirror of the emotion and personality that she puts into her music. When you hear her play you can visualize the setting she is portraying. A real touch of class that anyone would be proud to emulate." —*Rick Thum, Dulcimer luthier and performer*

“Listeners will be swept away by Ruth’s lush and expressive hammer dulcimer performances. Ruth’s clear flowing style always modulates to create the perfect mood for a piece”... “very sensitive to the nuances of the music, allowing each tune to breathe.” —*Bill Troxler, Dulcimer Players News*

*Ruth's Instruction Books:*

“Ruth's expressive playing style and exemplary teaching methods are evident throughout this book. Here you will find both a collection of great tunes and a helpful resource for learning performance ideas, historical background, and personal creativity. Whether you play solo or with others, this book is for you!” —*Stephen Humphries, Music Educator and National hammered dulcimer champion*

“Ruth is an inspired musician, teacher and composer, and she infuses her music with vitality, fullness and serenity. Ruth's signature strength is her lyrical interpretation of music, in her own compositions and arrangements of others'. She brings an amazing array of talent to her playing, composing/arranging and teaching.” —*Kathy S., MA, student*

“Ruth's books are a ‘must have’ in every Hammered Dulcimer player's collection and repertoire! Ruth shares a song/tune in melody form, then she adds a simple arrangement for those whose abilities stretch beyond the melody alone. And for others who long for a more involved and creative arrangement, Ruth provides that as well. Thus, the music "grows" with the player. Her Heart to Hands book has been a joy and delight to me, and many others. Surely this new book will not disappoint!” —*Janet H., New York, student*

"Your classes pushed me to a new level and your course descriptions were exactly what you taught the class. Your gentle prodding and simple explanations of difficult issues helped me understand concepts that I had heard many times before. However, your teaching style—demonstration of the entire song, then explanations measure by measure—was a perfect match for so many of us who had been to other dulcimer workshops over the years. I also enjoyed your blend of using printed music and helping us hone our listening skills. Thank you for adding so much to my playing this year, and the entire class was grateful for the individual attention. Next year, I will probably take any class you offer, at any level, just to continue my musical growth. I played some songs from your workshop for my wife when I returned home. She said, 'I can hear your progress. You must have had some great teachers.'" —*Thomas M., Kentucky Music Week, student*

“Ruth Smith is one of the best hammered dulcimer players I have ever had the opportunity to study with. Her arrangements offer something so different and so exciting that joy radiates from each note.” —*Alice W-R., Ohio, student*