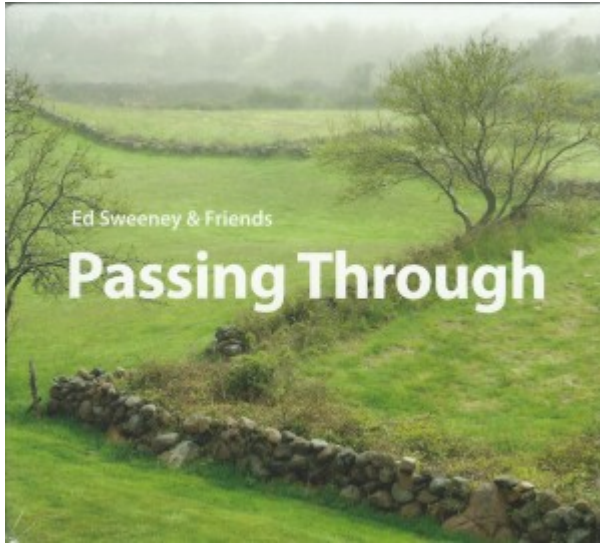


Ed Sweeney & Friends Passing Through



Years ago I met Ed Sweeney at a Rhode Island Songwriters Association event. He handed me his CD, *Inside Fezziwigs*'. Many years later, that CD has become a holiday favorite. And much like Dickens' Fezziwig character, Ed has a generous way - smiling, gracious and happy to chat and catch up when you see him.

Ed has spent his entire career studying people and the history behind their music. He is a fabulous steel string finger-style player and *Passing Through* is a fine collection highlighting 35 years of work - practice, learning, playing, traveling abroad and teaching. He has studied with and performed alongside many top professionals in the field of traditional music, and his work has appeared in *Not for Ourselves Alone: The Story of Elizabeth Cady Stanton & Susan B. Anthony*, a documentary by Ken Burns. Most recently he performed in Taiwan alongside Pipa master Yang Wei.

Much like the man, the music he chooses to record is friendly and warm-hearted. *Passing Through*, a 25-tune instrumental collection of traditional music, features some of Ed's finest picking - five-string and fretless banjo and six and 12-string guitars.

Ed's banjo and guitar playing lead you to the heart of a young gal waiting for her true love to return from the Revolution in "Johnny Has Gone for a Soldier." In "The Battle Cry of Freedom" you'll hear soldiers rooting for the Union cause. "Free America," a grand Revolutionary War number featuring Sally McNight, hammer dulcimer; Jeff Davis, fiddle and mandolin; and Mark Roberts, Irish wood flute; will muster up the patriot in you.



This collection is rooted in tradition, yet you will never feel you have to know the history behind each tune to enjoy the music. Delicately crafted arrangements invite the listener to create their own storyline. You may experience moments of joy listening to the Welsh hymn "Hyfrydol" (accompanied by Sally McKnight on hammer dulcimer and Catherine Hawkes playing recorder) or moments of sadness in his solo guitar rendition of "Talk About Suffering." A background chorus and a solemnly played guitar on "When Jesus Wept" deliver a memorable rendition of the patriotic Revolutionary War composition written in the 1700s by William Billings.

On "My Old Kentucky Home," Ed has invited home an old Rhode Island favorite, Stephen Snyder, to join him on piano; add in a violin solo by Karl Dennis and you'll pine away and yearn for the comforts of home and those you love and miss. Another Rhode Island favorite, Dan Moretti sneaks in a breathy clarinet part on "Blue Bell." Joining Ed on guitar and Karl on violin, Mance Grady strikes the bones on the American fiddle tune "West Fork Girls" - a tune sure to move you to dance.

The banjo can be a true aural assault if not tuned or played properly. Ed will transform your thinking about this traditional American instrument. "The Glendy Burke" and the "Mole in the Ground" are fine examples of his skill on fretless banjo. He plays clawhammer (or frailing) style banjo. Frailing and fretless banjo are two uniquely traditional American instruments and Ed has studied and mastered both.

Many of the songs Ed chose to record exemplify the place he has carved for himself in American folk tradition. His website notes his "music entertains as well as educates. He uses his musical expertise, breadth of knowledge and wonderful sense of humor to help listeners come to understand the motivations, stories and culture that have made us what we are today." If you had just one song to purchase from this collection, this reviewer would select the first cut, "A Land of Rest."

Learn more about Ed and the complete listing of friends on this recording at edsweeneymusic.com