

Kenny has no problem slowing down the tunes. He plays each one in distinct phrases. It might be possible to zero in on each phrase if one were quick enough with the remote control.

There are several important Baker tunes presented here as well as a couple of Bill Monroe's tunes closely associated with Baker. The tunes include "Grassy Fiddle Blues," "Denver Belle," "Festival Waltz," "Jerusalem Ridge" and "Road To Columbus." There are two tunes in Bb, "Windy City" and "Kelly Lynn Waltz," that should provide any budding fiddler with more than nodding acquaintance with the workings of that key.

The waltzes and "Grassy Fiddle Blues" display a wealth of Kenny's trademark double stops. His bowing techniques are in evidence as well, even his stop and start technique where he stops the bow in the middle of an up stroke and then starts it, then stops and starts again. While hard to explain in words, it's a basic element of his style.

The production of the package is marginal. The accompanying booklet is accurate enough in its transcriptions, but the layout is poor. The "Festival Waltz" transcription is interrupted by three pages of advertising. The printing quality approximates bootleg specifications. The video is adequate but the audio portion suffers. The fiddle breaks up on the sound track and Buck Graves guitar sounds like it was recorded underwater.

Despite the quality shortcomings, there is a lot here for the fiddler who wants to learn something of Kenny Baker's style. What he doesn't say with words, he surely makes up for with his fiddle and bow. (Ridge Runner Home Lessons, P.O. Box 122114, Fort Worth, TX 76121)RCB

THE GREAT AMERICAN MUSIC COMPANY. Produced by North Carolina Public Television, hosted by Liz and Lynn Shaw.

North Carolina Public Television debuted its new series, *The Great American Music Company*, on Saturday, July 27, 1991, with additional episodes following on the five Saturday nights through August. Public TV officials have high hopes for the sensitive, upbeat exploration of American roots music including finding funding for seven more installments and national airplay for the series through PBS or other routes. Judging from the initial episodes, their hopes are well placed.

The Great American Music Company ambitiously aims to capture the joy of playing and listening to traditional music while presenting something of its social and historical roots in addition to feature concerts by some of the finest current practitioners. The show's one hour debut and thirty minute regular episodes derive their structure from the goals, opening with a visit to an event or venue where people enjoy the music, followed by an interview with an acknowledged

expert and concluding with a concert segment recorded last year at the UNC Center for Public Television's Research Triangle Park Studios before a live audience. The series opener, "The Story Of The Fiddle," visited the fall Homecoming at the Museum Of Appalachia, examined million dollar Stradivari fiddles at the Smithsonian and finished with a fascinating cross-cultural concert by North Carolina African-American old-time musicians Joe & Odell Thompson, superstar Louisiana French fiddler Michael Doucet of the group Beausoliel, Celtic fiddler Liz Carroll and series hosts Liz and Lynn Shaw from Canton, N.C. The entire program exuded genuine warmth and devotion to the music.

The Shaws, who developed the idea for the series some seven years ago during their involvement with the Nashville Network's "Fire On The Mountain" program, play the host role perfectly. Since she's a fifth generation fiddler from Haywood County and didn't leave the mountains at all until age fourteen, while Lynn is a citybilly from Michigan who fell in love with Appalachian music and Liz some fifteen years ago, they provide a balanced perspective that no single host can match. The Shaws, moreover, never let their knowledge of the music or respect for tradition obscure their enthusiasm and energy. That injects a loose jam session feeling into the performance segments even though the good to excellent camera work suggests they've been thoroughly rehearsed. This is not to say that the program lacks glitches and shortcomings, such as patter sometimes too clever and sets the slightest bit too downhome and funky. The overall effect, however, remains both respectful and up-to-date, providing a wonderful primer for the new comer and plenty of exceptional live music to intrigue the expert.

"Bluegrass!" the second episode, August 3, 1991 opens with a perhaps ill-advised visit to Asheville tourist trap Bill Stanley's BBQ & Bluegrass, but moves quickly to an interview with Ricky Skaggs, who became a country music superstar a decade ago after nearly twenty years in bluegrass. A delightful twenty-minute concert by the Grand Ole Opry's Jim & Jesse and the Virginia Boys provides a highlight for the entire series, demonstrating why the McReynolds brothers have remained on the cutting edge of bluegrass music for nearly forty years.

The other high impact moment for the *The Great American Music Company* comes with former Winfield guitar champ Robin Kessinger's display of flatpicking mastery during the "Music Of The Great Smoky Mountains" episode. Anyone interested in how to get elementary school age kids into traditional music should view the condensed version of Liz & Lynn's school program as the concert segment of "Novelty & Homemade Musical Instruments." Other original episodes examine African-American music of the Georgia/Carolina coast with a performance by the astonishing Menhaden Chanteymen, "Sea Island Serenade" and "Railroad Songs" with a focus on Jimmie Rodgers featuring Asheville musician Wayne Erbsen.

The Great American Music Company deserves the hopes and resources that North Carolina Public Television has invested in the series. The Shaws brim with enthusiasm for future shows and widespread distribution. Contact your local PBS station. AM

of Tennessee Press, 1991. Hardcover, photos, discography, appendices, index, 199 pages, \$27.95.

There are few stories in the annals of country music more compelling than that of DeFord Bailey. Bailey, a diminutive and somewhat crippled harmonica player from middle Tennessee, was one of the first stars on the Grand Ole Opry and was, in fact, the very first person to perform on the show after it was given that name in 1927. Bailey was also a participant in the first commercial recording session held in Nashville and a major star into the 1940s. But what makes Bailey's story especially poignant is that he was the ultimate outsider in the close-knit world of country music: DeFord Bailey was a black man, the grandson of slaves.

DeFord Bailey: A Black Star In Early Country Music, a superb and long-awaited biography, was written with the complete cooperation and encouragement of its subject. That is as important as it is unlikely. Between the time of his death in 1982, DeFord Bailey confided in few people and virtually no writers or historians. As a result, his career (and its aftermath) has long been shrouded in mystery and speculation. He has never received the credit he deserves as a country music pioneer.

David Morton was working for the city of Nashville when he met DeFord Bailey in 1973. The wary Bailey gradually warmed up to the younger man and they eventually became close friends. The two men shared dozens of conversations over the years; Morton cites nearly sixty-five taped interviews in one of the book's appendices. When the time finally came to tell DeFord Bailey's story, there was no one in the world better suited to the task than Morton. Noted historian Charles Wolfe came on board to shore up the sections on old-time music and the early Opry and to help structure the narrative. Together, Morton and Wolfe have crafted a work that belongs in every serious country music library.

The authors use Bailey's own words wherever possible in *DeFord Bailey* to recount his long and eventful life. Bailey was a plain-spoken and largely unschooled man ("I never did get upstairs in my talking"), but he saw the world clearly and his observations are generally pretty shrewd. Despite a life that had more than its fair share of troubles, Bailey had a remarkably positive attitude and never talked much about the bad times he'd seen. That act of selective self-editing deprives the narrative of some built-in pathos, but what remains is endlessly fascinating and thought provoking.

Bailey's recollections, coupled with the authors' astute analysis, shed considerable light on a number of interesting topics, including: Bailey's sixteen-year tenure on the Grand Ole Opry; his travels with such Opry stars as Bill Monroe, the Delmore Brothers, Uncle Dave Macon and Roy Acuff; his place within the tradition of what he called "black hillbilly music" (Bailey also played banjo and guitar); his 1941 dismissal from the Opry; the development of the radio and music industries in Nashville; the ASCAP/BMI feud that helped to end Bailey's career as a musician and the "folk revival" of the early '60s, during which Bailey returned briefly to performing. Even fairly advanced students of old-time music will learn quite a bit from this lively, informative account.

DeFord Bailey: A Black Star In Early Country Music does an exceptional job of chronicling the life and times of one of country music's most enigmatic figures. The subject's involvement was crucial to the success of this book, but this is neither a sanitized, "authorized" biography nor a pointless ego trip. He was an important star at a critical time in the development of country music and his career is fully worthy of this book-length study. The story of DeFord Bailey is unique and Morton and Wolfe have done it justice with this extensively researched, thoughtful

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DEFORD BAILEY: A BLACK STAR IN EARLY COUNTRY MUSIC, by David C. Morton with Charles K. Wolfe. Knoxville: The University