

CLASSIC ARTICLE FROM THE FOG ARCHIVES

FOG Record Review

Originally Published June 1994, Contributed by: Ben Ford

Title: *The Hammered Dulcimer*
Artist: Bill Spence with Fennig's All-Star String Band
Label & Number: Front Hall FHR-302CD
Reviewed By: Benjamin Ford (FOG Member)

I first heard this record back around 1975 and it has been one of my favorites ever since. I've spent countless hours listening and playing along, learning many of the great tunes. Believe it or not, I'm still listening and learning!

At first blush it may seem a bit odd to choose a 22-year-old hammered dulcimer album for my first FOG record review. I offer these mitigating circumstances:

- 1) This is one of the best old-timey records I have ever heard anywhere;
- 2) Anyone who owns the Fiddle Fakebook knows that this album is one of the most-often cited sources for those transcriptions (and with good reason);
- 3) It has just been re-released on CD, recompiled with six selections from Bill Spence's second album, Saturday Night in the Provinces;
- 4) Some kindly soul has donated a copy of the CD to *Fiddlers of the Genesee*, and there will soon be a cassette copy available for loan.

Don't be fooled by the title! There's plenty of great fiddling on to be found here, ably supplied by Tom McCreesh. The piano, played by Joan Pelton and Toby Stover, makes up the entire rhythm section giving the tunes a real New England dance hall feel.

Rounding out the group, Jon Pederson gives a stellar performance on frailed banjo. While hammered dulcimer is the feature instrument, everybody gets their turn on most of the cuts and each instrument is featured on at least one tune.

There are a total of 42 different tunes on this album mostly arranged in medleys of two or three. Many, such as *Jaybird*, *Midnight on the Water*, *Ragtime Annie* and *Golden Slippers* are familiar FOG tunes. Others, such as *Cabri Waltz* and *Cherokee Shuffle* will, I hope, soon become part of our repertoire.

Whether you want to practice up on old favorites, learn some great new (old) tunes, or just listen for sheer enjoyment this record is well worth your time.

Editor's Note: Ben Ford is a former FOGger who now plays guitar with *Kate Lee & No Stings Attached*, and appeared with her band on WXXI's *On Stage* program which aired on November 30, 2008.

