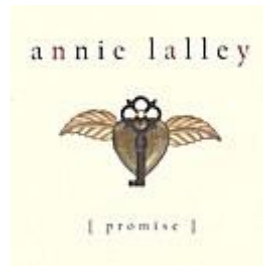


## Mp3 Annie Lalley - Promise



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Acclaimed debut CD of original songs which features some of the finest musicians in New York and the southern Appalachian mountains of her home. It was recorded with Sony producer Rob Friedman, and U.S. fingerstyle guitar champion, Bill Mize. 13 MP3 Songs FOLK: Folk Pop, FOLK: Modern Folk Details: From an article in the Green Line (now the Mountain Express) by Jim Magill On a street corner in downtown Asheville, there's a wind-tattered notice board peppered with staples and rusted thumbtacks where a collection of flimsy handbills promoting this or that happening is regularly shredded by gusts, or torn down to make room for more. At the top, out of reach of capricious hands, there's a remnant of a poster shellacked to the board where a huge pair of eyes above Anne Lalley's name looks out through dark lashes over the daily news of the local music scene. There's frankness and passion in that gaze, but for her audience, it's not the eyes that are most arresting - its the voice. The Voice. At 7p.m. on New Year's Eve, many of the venues for Asheville's First Night celebration were just beginning to fill up as things got underway, but in a downtown bank lobby, the room was nearly full for Anne Lalley's set, accompanied by the impeccable guitar of Windham Hill artist Bill Mize. When his touring schedule permits, Mize likes to back up Anne's sparkling soprano. She beams at the audience, introducing a tune in a soft, breathless voice suddenly punctuated by startling, explosive laughter. It's a pressure valve, the self-deprecation of a genuinely shy parson driven into the spotlight by a love of performing. The audience recognizes it and warms to it. For Anne, who was born and raised here, this is home; these are her friends and neighbors, and she's as comfortable as it's possible for her to be. Her clear voice soars as more people crowd in. For a local performer, Anne Lalley is surprisingly well traveled. During her college years, she made trips to Mexico, Canada and Central America. Upon graduation from Warren Wilson College, she accepted a friend's invitation to come visit in Paris. By the time Anne arrived however, her

friend had accepted a job in the south of France, and was preparing to leave. Anne unexpectedly found herself alone in a foreign country, a situation she refers to as 'Bambi in Paris.' Though her grasp of the language may have been tentative, her voice needed little translation, and soon she was singing with a rock band. The attention her singing attracted landed her a three-month run in the lead role as Janet in a French production of "The Rocky Horror Picture Show." She returned to the United States, this time to the D.C. area, where she was busy with summer stock theater work until a neck injury sustained when her car was hit by a drunk driver left her unable to perform (although she did acquire her equity card at Ford's Theatre). The resultant surgery took her voice away for three months and turned her life upside down. She came home to Asheville. Home is now a small sun-washed house, recently purchased, on a quiet street North Asheville. There's a small room in back with a microphone and a DAT recorder, where Anne is beginning the process of recording an album. She's ambivalent about the project which might seem unusual for someone who pays the mortgage by doing voice-overs and other studio vocal work. As self-critical as she is, the permanence of a recording is intimidating, as is the thought of boxes of unsold tapes. 'I love singing but I hate listening to playbacks. I always think I could do it better.' For now, she plans to 'grow" the album a song at a time, constantly checking its pulse for commercial viability until a recording emerges, but it's clear that live performance is where her heart is. The inner conflict occasioned when a very private person is compelled to perform before the public creates a visible tension, which is what makes Anne Lalley's shows so interesting. Few performers could present themselves in such an emotionally naked way without appearing contrived. Every performance is a risk but she's learned how to make things a little easier. "At early shows at Stone Soup, I was so temperamental that I'd go and hide under a table if I didn't like my set ...After I came back from France and was pounding the pavement I remember looking at the set list during a show with my partner and he asked, 'What's the next song?' and I told him and he said, 'Well, I don't feel like that one' and it was funny, our roles had switched because I said, 'Whaddaya mean you don't feel like playing it right now.' I had toughened up." Considering some of the curves life has thrown her, it's surprising she hasn't become callused as well. On a trip to Central America she could only watch as her best friend and traveling companion was killed in a traffic accident. Her own accident caused her to put a promising theatrical career on hold and for years she spent much of her time caring for her invalid mother. Given these experiences, and the confessional nature of her original songs, it's surprising that while writing is a catharsis for her, it's not always comfortable. When

asked why she writes songs, her initial response is a long thoughtful silence. When the words come, they are slow and painstaking. 'I think it's way for me to try to know myself and how I'm reacting to the life around me,' she says. "I don't like it and I haven't written much. It hurts, it's confrontational, and a lot of times you put feelings out there you like to think you've evolved away from, that you're more mature and things don't get to you. It's a lot easier singing other people's songs, but there is a different connection, and almost a high that you get when you can share your feelings. You become inside out, and you can give that to your audience. It is, for me, very satisfying. It's also the scariest thing in the world." On nights when she's got the audience in the palm of her hand, Anne will often put aside her guitar and step up to the microphone for an unaccompanied rendition of her own "Deer in the Wood". She sings, "Love me like a deer in the wood..." Alone, eyes closed and smiling, she is completely exhilarated by song. For many listeners hanging on to the thread of melody weaving the room together, it is her anthem, for the simile is perfect - the shy creature drawn to the light, trusting love to ensure that its transfixing beam is not an oncoming headlight but truly the spotlight in which the fragile and beautiful are held up and admired. Listen for her the next time she ventures into the light.

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