

Mp3 Contrarians - The Contrarians



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Drawing from Appalachian, New England, French Canadian, and Celtic traditions, as well as jazz, pop, rock, and world beats, the Contrarians offer a blend of original and traditional tunes. 13 MP3 Songs in this album (65:21) ! Related styles: COUNTRY: Bluegrass, FOLK: Irish Traditional People who are interested in The Chieftains David Grisman should consider this download. Details: Drawing from Appalachian, New England, French Canadian, and Celtic traditions, as well as jazz, pop, rock, and world beats, the Contrarians offer a blend of their own original tunes and other contra dance favorites. They travel in ever widening circles to perform in concert and for contra dances from their base in West Virginia. To capture the energy and mood of a Contrarian-fueled contra dance, when you play this recording, you may first want to paint yourself this mental picture: A genre-bending mix of music greets you as you enter a room of whooping whirling dancers of all ages and backgrounds. The Contrarians are in a zone, having selected a medley matched to fit the mood and moves introduced by the caller. Paul and Johns blazing fiddle and mandolin leads weave together a musical quilt crafted over their thirty-plus years of making music together, while Gary on guitar and keys and Will on the bass take the music through a variety of red hot rhythms and hip-swaying grooves. When the trumpet soars out over the dancers, matched by gleeful hollers from the dancers, your feet take over and you are on your way to a joyful night of music and dance. A four-piece contradance band, the Contrarians of West Virginia play contradance and square dance music on fiddles, guitar, mandolin, piano, tenor banjo, upright bass, and a bluesy trumpet. A Contrarians event delivers dazzling melody - including some great original tunes - along with a solid yet imaginative approach to rhythm. The band has consistently "wowed the crowd" at dances and dance weekends throughout Ohio-Kentucky-West Virginia and beyond. Their self-titled CD, released in late 2007, shows "why the band is in great demand at Contradances from Washington DC to Cleveland...."

according to Paul Gartner of the Charleston Gazette (full review). The Contrarians evolved from the former Trusty House Band, local favorites of FOOTMAD's dance community in Charleston, WV. They were a hit at Pigtown Fling (Cincinnati) in 2001, at the Dandelion Romp (Oberlin) in 2002, and trips to Glen Echo Park, MD for the Friday Night Dance and the FSGW (Folk Song Society of Greater Washington) dance brought rave reviews. They've become an important part of the regional dance calendar and increasingly present at special dances and weekends, also performing in concert settings which showcases their wide ranging talents including singing and songwriting (see complete listing). Hailing from West Virginia, the Contrarians are comfortable in a variety of styles and traditions: Celtic, New England, swing, and of course, old-time (Appalachian). They also write original material. With rhythmic variety, occasional glimpses of ethnic music, and unique improvisations, dancers let loose and never lose interest in the music. "It's rare for a band that is not on the road constantly to achieve this level of expertise," says Ron Buchanan, a renowned dance caller who travels nationwide from his home in Pittsburgh, "but I've known some of these guys for over twenty years since they were playing in string bands that traveled to festivals all over the country. Most of them make their living in other ways, but their first love is the music." Margo Blevin, former director of Augusta Heritage Workshops, wrote of the Contrarians at Wild Wonderful Weekend in January, 2003, "The comments were entirely enthusiastic and complimentary. We particularly appreciated the incredible job you did with the band workshop. Adding that was a big question mark, as we had no idea if musicians were coming and would take the workshop. It was definitely one of the highlights of the weekend, as were all the dances from the first to the very last." The band consists of : Will Carter: stand-up bass Gary Reynolds: guitar, trumpet, piano John Longwell: mandolin, tenor banjo, fiddle Paul Epstein: fiddle reviews: Taking a listen to The Contrarians by Paul Gartner Staff Writer, Charleston Gazette (WV) December 20, 2007 Spend a few minutes listening to this self-titled CD the band's first and you can hear why The Contrarians are in demand at contra dances from Washington, D.C., to Cleveland, Lexington, Ky., and Jonesboro, Tenn. When the need arises, this four-man band blends fiddle, piano, guitar, mandolin, trumpet, clawhammer banjo and tenor banjo. The result is a very musical, layered mix of traditional and modern tunes with 12 originals written by fiddler Paul Epstein, guitarist Gary Reynolds and mandolinist John Longwell. Rounding out the quartet is bassist Will Carter. Reynolds' wonderful piano playing adds the right backup and bounce to the medley New Years Day/Kate and Roses/Peninas Wedding. New Years and Penina were written by Epstein. There are

a couple of waltzes, Waltz of the Floating Bridge and Waltz to Remember. The former has some lovely mandolin, the latter some very powerful fiddle. Spootiskerry/Wizards Walk/Sligo Creek is another nice medley. At times, the band shifts gears like a jazz quartet. These guys do a lot of listening, and leave each other lots of room. And lest no stone is unturned, Crocketts Honeymoon/George Booker are two old-time favorites. Throughout, the music is anchored by Carters able bass playing. The CD was recorded and mixed by Bob Webb in Charleston. By Paul Gartner Dance Gigs Like Synchronized Swimming, Contrarian Says by Bill Lynch for the Charleston Gazette (WV) Paul Epstein, the unofficial leader of contra dance band The Contrarians, says the group isnt too interested in a big-time music career. He says what makes The Contrarians different from a lot of bands is that while no one is adverse to making money, its never been what the band was about. The Contrarians are a little older, a little settled and everyone is pretty happy with their day jobs. Will is an attorney. Im an elementary school teacher at Ruffner Elementary. John is a cabinetmaker; he owns Green Creek Woodshop. Gary, hes what we call the successful musician among us. Hes a stay-at-home dad. His wife has a good job, Epstein said over the phone recently during a quick break in the school day. Theyre settled, but theyre not lazy. The Contrarians are regulars at FOOTMAD dances, and they travel to other cities in the region to play contra dances. The band will also release its first CD Friday, Dec. 21. The recording includes original material composed by the band. The Contrarians began and evolved almost parallel with the growth of FOOTMAD. Epstein, a fiddle player, was instrumental in the creation of the organization in the early 80s and was the groups first president. He and mandolin player John Longwell were some of the original musicians who played music for the contra dances. Bassist Will Carter started playing FOOTMAD events after he graduated law school in 1989. It was sort of a pickup band, Carter explained. Anyone who wanted to could just show up. But by the early 90s, it seemed to me it was the same guys who just kept coming around. The band lumbered on happily without an official name for a few more years before FOOTMAD organizers pressed them to get one. They said they needed something for the fliers, Epstein said. So, somebody gave us a name. We were called the Trusty House Band. In 2000, guitarist and keyboard player Gary Reynolds joined the band after the death of original THB guitarist Hunt Charach. Shortly thereafter, band members decided to change their name to be more reflective of who they were. We got a little more organized, Carter said. We started calling ourselves The Contrarians, after the music we played. The Contrarians play a mix of bluegrass, roots music and Celtic tunes, among other styles.

Carter estimates the band has roughly 30 song sets, each composed of two to three songs running 10 to 15 minutes each. They adapt the songs to fit the dance moves taught at each contra dance. The fun part for us is when we have one of these dance weekends, Epstein said. We get booked to do those sometimes and a lot of what I like to call dance gypsies come to these things. The dance gypsies are the contra dance fanatics. They travel, sometimes from significant distances, to dance. Its a passion, and theyre good at it. The music and the dance just comes together, he said. Well watch them, and it will be like synchronized swimming. All the movements will be in sync. Were part of that and can improvise. Thats one of the great parts of what we do. Carter agrees. Musically, the chance to craft your own sound is very satisfying. Carter and Epstein say life in a part-time band is fun. The Contrarians have been around in one form or another for 20 years now. Everyone, they say, is content to keep trudging along. Music is something Ive done all my life, Epstein said. The times I havent been doing it, havent been playing publicly to some degree, theres always been something missing. To contact staff writer Bill Lynch, use e-mail or call 348-5195.

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