

Mp3 Airdance - Cloud Nine



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Swinging instrumental dance music, rooted in New England tradition, but with Celtic, Quebecois and Jazz influences. 13 MP3 Songs in this album (52:44) ! Related styles: FOLK: Contra Dance, JAZZ: Dance Band People who are interested in Bob! Rodney Miller Wild Asparagus should consider this download. Details: THE BAND AIRDANCE Rodney Miller - fiddle Mary Cay Brass - piano, piano accordion Stuart Kenney - upright bass, banjo David Surette - guitar, mandolin Marko Packard - flute, saxophone, tin whistle, guitar Sam Zucchini - percussion Its been six years since the first practice sessions of the musicians that came to be known as Airdance. Although assembled as an ensemble that would record music to accompany a film about New England contra dancing, all five members of Airdance already had long careers playing for contra and square dances, in drafty town halls, cavernous school gyms, outdoor festivals, and the occasional barn. They had played for experienced dancers, rank beginners, and everything in between. They had worked for callers who demanded specific tunes, and for those with whom anything was pretty much okay, as long as it got people moving. That experience and dedication to the tradition was so joyously evident in their first CD, that listeners wanted more. Three years later, a second recording, Flying On Home, was released which further defined the Airdance sound: virtuosic, playful, and always surprising. Were playing the music we love to play, says fiddler Rod Miller. In that first CD, we were experimenting with repertoire. Now were focusing in on contemporary contra music as its heard around the country: with deep roots in Celtic and Appalachian old-time music. Its impossible to divorce this music from its source as the impetus and support behind the figures of the dance, and Millers fiddling is at the heart of the sound. From the opening notes of the first tune Cloud Nine, a driving reel in the Quebecois style, Millers superb articulation and sense of phrasing grab the listeners attention. Whether on guitar, or mandolin David Surette is a champion ensemble player. His bluesy duet with Miller

on Muddy Roads is highlighted by South African accents. And he flows seamlessly into the melody of the reel Lexi McKaskill. When he and Miller play there's a connection, as in a spirited conversation between old friends. Mary Cay Brass, who has collaborated with Miller countless times over the years, produces piano accompaniments that are always solidly in the groove. Brass has experience not only in contra music but also Scandinavian and Balkan styles, and uses her depth of knowledge to vary the colors and phrasing: from the jazzy vamping of MacArthur Road, to the Irish details in Up Downy. The addition of Marko Packard allows the band to add a new layer to the texture. Packard's strong rhythm guitar work adds to the old-time feel on Cloud Nine. He partners perfectly with Stuart Kenney's banjo on Kenney's Bubble Pop. Packard also adds the sound of flute, giving the band a whole new take on their Celtic repertoire; and his sax-playing on Josephine Marsh's tune Jigermyster is delightful. Miller likes to refer to Airdance music as being floor tested. What drives our repertoire is enthusiasm and excitement, he says. Not only do we love a tune or an arrangement, but the dancers have to love it too. Musicians learn from the reaction of the dancers which transitions, and what placement of solos, are right. They hear that satisfying whoop as people feel the music and the dance steps to be exactly in synch. Since dancers are always asking for more waltzes, Airdance includes three on this CD. Brimstone Corner is sweet and sexy with an irresistible swing. Rogue Wave, is highlighted by Brass's spare accordion playing, giving it the feeling of a slow Irish air. And Chance Creek, gets a real southern feel from Surette's guitar solo and Kenney's banjo. Speaking of which, dancers everywhere are familiar with Kenney's skillful bass playing, which highlighted the first two Airdance recordings. Cloud Nine places his banjo playing front and center, especially on his own reel Arigana Highway. Weaving all these disparate instrumental elements together is where the genius of the Airdance personnel really shows. The foundation of their sound is the solid, inventive drumming of Sam Zucchini. His skill is in letting the drumming support the tune. This is evident in his brushwork on Brimstone Corner, that accents the syncopations of the waltz, as well as his bodhran playing in Cape Breton Jig, that lifts and drives the flute like the sound of dancing feet. As I write this, contra dances throughout the country are experiencing an influx of younger dancers: teenagers and college students who are drawn to the energy and sociability of the dances. They are sophisticated consumers of music, having been exposed to a variety of genres via radio, television and the Internet all their lives. They are the new generation of Air-dancers, who both love to dance and appreciate the complexity and spontaneity of this music. As Rod Miller says, We're out to inspire and excite people, both

listeners and dancers with this music. Or as I overheard one fan say recently This is dance nirvana! Cloud Nine, indeed.

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