

BOOK REVIEWS...

Ragtime for Fiddle and Mandolin

Stephen Parker

My first encounter with ragtime music probably came about during the Trad Jazz boom of the early 1960s when it seemed that everyone was competing to outdo each other with the loudest, fastest and most raucous versions of Tiger Rag. Later, the soundtrack to the film "The Sting" brought some of Scott Joplin's piano rags to everyone's notice. It wasn't until I heard an LP by The Highwoods String Band that the notion of string band rags occurred. In more recent times, several CDs have included re-workings of some of these tunes. With the publication of this fine collection we now have available a wide choice of such rags.

Stephen Parker, together with his editor, Alan Davis, have done a fine job of reproducing, in musical notation, 124 rags from bands such as 'The East Texas Serenaders', 'The Grinnell Giggers', 'The Scottsdale String Band' and a host of others. There are also versions of tunes from current players such as Bruce Molsky, Suzy Thompson and Brad Leftwich.

For those of you who don't like to read music there is a bonus, a CD with all 124 tunes so you can hear what the dots represent. The CD is in mp3 format, which is how they can get so much on it. There is still more. 16 original piano rags by Mr. Parker, some useful looking stuff on playing mandolin and a brief discussion on the history of rag time music. There are also photos and drawings throughout the book, which contribute to making it an attractive as well as useful addition to the source material of any old time fiddler or mandolin player. The musical notation is clear, well set out and easy to read.

When setting out to do this review I contacted a couple of fiddle discussion groups on the net. Those who had seen the book recommended it highly, as I do to you. A valuable source of new material for any band that wants to include some rare tunes in their repertoire. The book is available from the web address below for \$35 plus \$8 for first class airmail delivery. On the web site you will see details of Steve Parker's latest book, '150 Hot Tunes for Fiddle and Mandolin', which I hope to review soon. There is a special deal if you buy both books at the same time.

For details please contact:
www.ragtime-resource.com