



Review for "THE RESONATOR", magazine of Banjos Unlimited,
by Eddy Davis

STUNG!

Arno Hagenars

Great! Great! Great!

In all my 66 years I've never been so pleased and impressed with the professionalism of "banjoists" as I am at this very moment.

I was extremely honored to be inducted into "The National Four-String Banjo Hall of Fame" in Guthrie, Oklahoma this past May. The Saturday evening concert held in the Pollard Theater, in my opinion, should have been videotaped for all to see. I saw a variety of banjo talent from the great Paul Erickson and Cynthia Sayer to the vaudevillian Pat Terry, Jr. Then there was Buddy Wachter, who has blossomed into perhaps the greatest banjo player of all time. He was accompanied superbly by guitar, piano and bass. It so happens that the guitarist and pianist were Johnny Baier and Randy Morris who are also excellent banjoists. I would pay most any price to hear Buddy perform the marvelous Henry Mancini tune "*Charade*" as he did that evening. In these 66 years I have never heard jazz on the banjo, be it traditional, bebop, or beyond, played better than by Frank Vignola or Howard Alden. Then there is the incomparable Jimmy Mazzy.

That now brings us to Mr. Hagenars and this brilliant CD. In listening to it I said to myself this guy is like Harry Reser and beyond. He's not only one of the best composers I've heard today but he also has the technique and ability to play in a classical setting or swing with syncopation. If there were no banjo on this CD I would still love these compositions and arrangements, but the banjo performances here once again prove to me that this four-string instrument (that I love to call a "merry wang") has the ability to perform in any musical situation or setting. The music on this CD explores twenties' pop, swing, bebop and salsa, along with contemporary classical originals. The musicians and arrangers that Arno uses on this CD are definitely the tops in their field. This CD package contains an extremely explicit analysis of each selection which gives the listener an invaluable insight into the music and so I will not analyze this CD track by track as I sometimes do. All but five selections of the fourteen are written and arranged by Arno and at the risk of sounding redundant are "in my opinion" perfection. "*Crackerjack*" written by Harry Reser comes with a delightful new arrangement for banjo and a clarinet quartet. Then there is a pop tune that was performed by Reser "*Oh! Boy, What A Girl!*" that gets a new rendition. Arno has all the controlled technique anyone would want, plus he makes the tenor banjo syncopate and swing.



He belongs "in my opinion" among the top of the list of the most talented banjoists of our time. Needless to say, he does everything I want to hear in the way of composition and banjo playing. I could go on and on about this CD, but my praise would be redundant, redundant, redundant. I don't know how many banjoists, if any, that attend the banjo festivals around the world will appreciate or understand this banjoist, but we should certainly appreciate that he is a benchmark for the youth of tomorrow to work toward.

I very highly recommend this CD.

Eddy Davis