

Guitarist's CD varies, dazzles

CD REVIEW

RED SKY

By Bill Henry with Jake Armerding, Sam Bush, Vassar Clements and Tim O'Brien; on OMS Records.

past and present, award-winning fiddlers Vassar Clements and Tim O'Brien, and this CD is as superb musically as the songs collected for it.

Henry's choice of songs is elegant indeed. "Highland Wedding/Rocky Mountain Goat" offers Celtic tenderness rocketing into fiery bluegrass. Clements' fiddle weaves intricately in the classic "Sweet Georgia Brown." With piano (Steve Hunt) and harmonica (Jonathan Edwards), Connecticut's Henry sings a remake of his touching, lonely New England ballad "Fisherman's Lament." He draws on his jazz background playing electric guitar (spurred by time at Berklee College of Music) in the original "Jazz'n," spiced by tenor sax and organ.



STEPHEN IDE/The Patriot Ledger

Bill Henry performs at the Rose Garden Coffeehouse in Mansfield in March with Northern Lights.

Behind it all is Henry's emotive guitar playing, which emphasizes melody while showcasing his dexterity and talent. He loves instrumental duets, where guitar and mandolin, for example, might play off each other note by note in harmony. You get the feeling that Henry is out

to entertain and play memorable songs, yet you can't help but be impressed with his guitar flourishes.

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—STEPHEN IDE
The Patriot Ledger

Bill Henry may not be a household name. But as a 20-year member of the progressive bluegrass band Northern Lights, Henry arguably is one of the genre's most respected acoustic guitarists and singers. His latest solo project, "Red Sky" (www.omsrecords.com), is a sweet mix of folk, swing, Celtic, jazz, country and traditional music, from uplifting originals to covers of songs by Dan Fogelberg and James Taylor, and Jimmy Buffett.

A skilled flatpicker influenced by Tony Rice and Doc Watson, Henry dazzles in instrumentals like "Hippodrome Reel" and "Cattle in the Cane/Early Morning Riser." The latter is a fast-picked number reminiscent of "Red-Haired Boy," with dynamic fiddler Jake Armerding (who also adds vocals on other tracks) and renowned mandolinist Sam Bush (Nash Ramblers, New Grass Revival).

Add in members of Northern Lights