

Krauss' fine vocals out front in latest release

ALISON KRAUSS AND UNION STATION, "Lonely Runs Both Ways" (Rounder)

Ever since I saw Alison Krauss and Union Station (for free!) in the early '90s at the Lowell Folk Festival, I knew that she had a voice and overall sound that people would enjoy.

I never could have imagined the success that this multiplatinum-selling Grammy winner would eventually achieve. It is well-deserved, and has served to introduce millions of mainstream music fans to acoustic bluegrass – music once relegated to an undercurrent of devotees.

Krauss has served as ambassador to the form of music she always has loved, though her status as a country music diva could have derailed her to the supposedly more commercially viable realm of Nashville's music.

Instead, Krauss has persevered, performing music her way, with the support of her band, Union Station. With her tender-sweet vocals, Krauss could have jettisoned her talented band years ago to find new sounds and styles. But she stuck with her group just as they have stuck with her.

On their latest 15-song release, "Lonely Runs

Both Ways" (Rounder), Alison Krauss and Union Station pick up where they left off with their 2002 near double-platinum live album.

The collaboration results in a luxurious mix of Krauss's captivating, folksy, slow-ballad, harmony-rich singing mixed with hard-driving bluegrass. Joining the group is dobro great Jerry Douglas, who was a significant contributor on the group's live CD and DVD.

But Krauss's vocals – properly so – are placed out front on this release. No one with ears can deny that Krauss's voice is among the purest sounding instruments in the land.

The songs, meanwhile, delve into subjects familiar to bluegrass and country fans – heartache, loneliness, regrets and reverence – set to the plaintive tones of Krauss's fiddle, Ron Block's banjo and Douglas's emotive dobro (he excels in an original instrumental "Unionhouse Branch).

Krauss handles most of the lead vocals, sharing a few songs with guitarist/mandolinist Dan Tyminski.

Krauss sings the sparse, banjo-led bluegrass of "My Poor Heart," which dwells on themes of lost love and trust. Loneliness is the focus of the soft country-folk of "Borderline," written by Sidney Cox & Suzanne Cox, members of The

Cox Family, whose CDs have been produced by Krauss.

And Krauss sings several melodies from R.L. Castleman, a Nashville writer who penned several past successful songs for the band: "The Lucky One," "Let Me Touch You for a While" and "Forget About It."

Tenor singer Tyminski performs "A Sad Song," the only Krauss original on this CD, written years ago with former Union Station banjoist Alison Brown (who moved on years ago to found her own successful venture, Nashville-based Compass Records). The hard-driving melody features Krauss on fiddle and harmonies.

Tyminski also sings "Pastures of Plenty," Woody Guthrie's Dust Bowl ballad of freedom and migrant farm workers.

With other songs from Gillian Welch and David Rawlings, Del McCoury, and a tender Ron Block melody, "A Living Prayer," with riveting vocals from Krauss, this CD will please every fan of this group and then some.

– **STEPHEN A. IDE**
The Patriot Ledger



Associated Press

Alison Krauss' new CD is called "Lonely Runs Both Ways."