

Ask Claire Lynch, and she'll tell you with a little laugh that she's a singer/songwriter. That's true enough, but the term is pitifully inadequate to really describe who she is and what she does. A singer, yes, with an emotional and dynamic range capable not only of perfectly embodying her own songs, but of blending seamlessly with singers such as Linda Ronstadt and Dolly Parton. A songwriter, surely, whose work displays a rare marriage of craft and honesty, compelling attention even in the hit-seeking world of Nashville publishing but best heard in her own voice. Yet beyond these things, Claire Lynch is a calm, gently glowing presence in the world of acoustic music, a woman whose commitment to music, friends and family is deep and steady enough to have won her a devoted following not only among those who ignore genre boundaries but also in the notoriously category-conscious world of bluegrass.

In his notes to Claire's second album for Rounder, *Silver and Gold*, Jon Hartley Fox called it the "best, most self-assured album [she] has ever made." More than two years have passed since that collection made its way into the Americana chart's Top 10, where it spent more than two months, and Lynch's artistic growth since then makes Fox's characterization no less applicable to *Love Light*. The intervening years have brought added depth to Lynch's singing and writing, and have turned the members of what was then a nearly-new Front Porch String Band lineup into an ensemble of unsurpassed sensitivity and creativity. Together with a well-selected complement of guests, they're able to trace the shapes of these songs with the precise and delicate touch of a sculptor, bringing their outlines to life with the economy and restraint that is, and with the richness of emotion, the mark of so much great art.

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of *Love Light* is the abundance of Lynch's own songs; for the first time, her name appears on a majority of the selections. These are songs of emotional power and musical grace, fusing elements of bluegrass, country and folk into creations so true and right that they sound, even on first listen, like old favorites. "I Don't Have To Dream" haunts the listener, the melancholy of its single, central minor chord resolved by the melodic simplicity and sense of the title line, and so does the tender recollection and memorable chorus of "Blue Water Holler" and the gentle bluegrass backbeat and lyric rhythm of "Love Light." They carry the hallmark of great writing, sounding so natural - almost inevitable - that it's easy to overlook the intelligence, skill and indefinable talent that created them. Claire Lynch has always been a strong, distinctive writer, but on this album, she has crossed the threshold that separates the truly outstanding from the good.

The same is true with the music - and musicians - here. Equally at home with the classic country timing of "I Don't Have To Dream" and the sophisticated swing of Henry Hipkens' "Stranger Things Have Happened," the Front Porch String Band has evolved into an ensemble of unsurpassed creativity and taste. Bassist Missy Raines - two times a winner of the International Bluegrass Music Association's Bass Player of the Year award - is a marvel, anchoring the band with a style founded on the simplicity of bluegrass and the subtle accents of jazz, while few guitarists have attracted more attention at the end of the decade than Jim Hurst, who has emerged from years of mainstream country work to dazzle audiences with his fluidity and stylistic range. Larry Lynch

may be one of the most unjustly overlooked mandolin players of the day, precisely because of the particular strengths he brings to the band; his wry solos and distinctive rhythms so elegantly embody the essence of each song that they seem almost to disappear. At its core, the music here comes from a genuine working band, flowing from the indescribable yet real connections forged in the years its members have now spent together on and off the stage.

Still, as central as Claire Lynch's songs and the Front Porch String Band are to *Love Light*, there's room for contributions from others. Lynch has an unerring eye for a great song, and in songs like Paul Craft and Cadillac Holmes' "I'm Movin'" or Tim Stafford and Bobby Starnes' "Savannah," she has found material that both reflects and illuminates her own - just as guest musicians Robert Bowlin, Alison Brown, Rob Ickes, Pat McInerney and the incomparable Glen Duncan not only bring their own instrumental voices to the music but shape their work to fit the curves and flowing rhythms of the core band. In the same way, the under-appreciated Keith Little's harmony vocals show a remarkable compatibility with Claire's voice; it's not surprising, then, that he appears with her not only on *Love Light*, but that the two were tapped as a pair to sing with the legendary Dolly Parton on her recent bluegrass album.

Neither is it surprising that Claire Lynch has earned the acclaim of her bluegrass peers in the International Bluegrass Music Association, giving her the title of Female Vocalist of the Year for 1997; there is no more distinctive voice in acoustic music today. Hers is mostly a gentle one, insin-

uating itself into the listener's consciousness delicately, with crystalline enunciation and a plaintive cast, yet capable of soaring with breathtaking assurance and authority. Though she can sing great bluegrass, she can't be contained within it; the loose, easy swing of jazz has too strong a hold on her vocal imagination, and one listen to "Stranger Things Have Happened" should be enough to convince all but the most obdurate bluegrassers that much more is gained than lost by it.

Taken together, these things make Claire Lynch not only a great artist, but a true pathfinder. There's no doubt that by restricting herself in one way or another - by plunging wholly into mainstream country's world of songwriting and studio vocals, or by staying within the banks of the bluegrass stream, or by embracing the role of singer/songwriter in today's folk music scene - Lynch could have an important career; she's got more than enough talent to succeed at any of them. Yet this she refuses to do, just as she has refused to allow her musical career to dominate her life. Instead, she has synthesized all of her varied loves and interests into something unique - not because it's new, but because it is a true reflection of both her own personality and the more tightly defined sounds she has loved and mastered. For this alone, she deserves - and, happily, has gotten - the respect and devotion of fans and musicians alike; that it also results in the beautiful, compelling music of *Love Light* is even more reason for celebration.

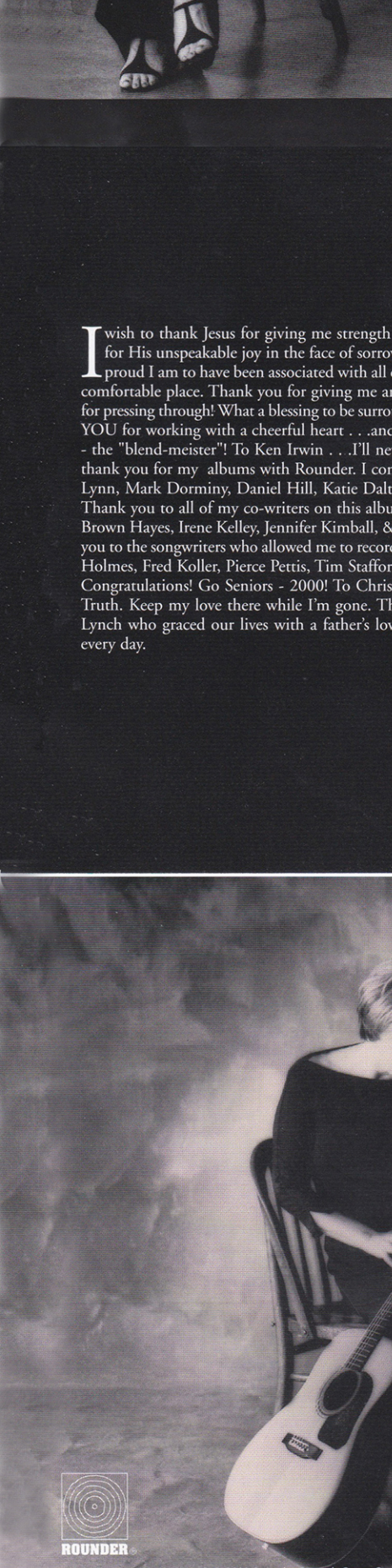
Jon Weisberger, December, 1999

- 1. **I'm MOVIN'**
(Paul Craft-Cadillac Holmes/Paul Craft Music, BMI)
- Jim Hurst acoustic guitar
Missy Raines bass
Larry Lynch mandolin
Glen Duncan fiddle
Keith Little harmony vocal
- 2. **I DON'T HAVE TO DREAM**
(Claire Lynch-Randy Archer/Universal-Songs of PolyGram International, Inc.-Butter and Egg Music, BMI-Universal-PolyGram International Publishing, Inc., ASCAP)
- Jim Hurst acoustic guitar
Missy Raines bass
Larry Lynch mandolin
Glen Duncan fiddle
Rob Ickes Dobro
Pat McInerney drums
Larry Lynch and Jim Hurst harmony vocals
- 3. **LOVE LIGHT**
(Claire Lynch-Pamela Brown Hayes/Universal-Songs of PolyGram International, Inc.-Butter and Egg Music-Samuel Clemens Songs, BMI)
- Jim Hurst acoustic guitar
Missy Raines bass
Larry Lynch mandolin
Robert Bowlin fiddle
Alison Brown banjo
Jim Hurst and Claire Lynch harmony vocals

- 4. **JEALOUSY**
(Claire Lynch-Irene Kelley/Universal-Songs of PolyGram International, Inc.-Butter and Egg Music, BMI-Secret Garden Music/LLC, ASCAP)
- Jim Hurst acoustic guitar
Missy Raines bass
Larry Lynch mandolin
Glen Duncan fiddle
Rob Ickes Wabash Avenue guitar
Keith Little harmony vocals
- 5. **MISSIONARY RIDGE**
(Pierce Pettis-Fred Koller/Universal-PolyGram International Publishing, Inc., ASCAP-Fred Koller Publ. Designee, BMI)
- Jim Hurst acoustic guitar
Missy Raines bass
Larry Lynch mandolin
Glen Duncan fiddle
Alison Brown banjo
Keith Little harmony vocals
- 6. **BLUE WATER HOLLER**
(Jess Leary-Claire Lynch/Song Matters, Inc.-Famous Music Corp., ASCAP-Universal-Songs of PolyGram International, Inc.-Butter and Egg Music, BMI)
- Jim Hurst acoustic guitar
Missy Raines bass
Larry Lynch mandolin
Glen Duncan fiddle
Rob Ickes Dobro
Jim Hurst harmony vocals

- 7. **STRANGER THINGS HAVE HAPPENED**
(Henry Hipkens/Pinspotter Music, Inc., BMI)
- Jim Hurst acoustic guitar
Missy Raines bass
Larry Lynch mandolin
Glen Duncan fiddle
Pat McInerney drums
Keith Little harmony vocal
- 8. **SAVANNAH**
(Tim Stafford-Bobby Starnes/Daniel House Music, BMI)
- Jim Hurst acoustic guitar
Missy Raines bass
Larry Lynch bouzouki
Robert Bowlin fiddle
Claire Lynch rhythm guitar
Jim Hurst harmony vocals
- 9. **HE DON'T LIKE TO TALK ABOUT IT**
(Jennifer Kimball-Claire Lynch/FMI Blackwood Music, Inc.-Garden Angel Music-Universal-Songs of PolyGram International, Inc.-Butter and Egg Music, BMI)
- Jim Hurst acoustic guitar
Missy Raines bass
Larry Lynch mandolin
Rob Ickes Dobro
Alison Brown banjo
Jim Hurst and Claire Lynch harmony vocals

- 10. **SWEETHEARTS AGAIN**
(Leslie Tucker/Tuckaway Music, BMI)
- Jim Hurst acoustic guitar
Missy Raines bass
Larry Lynch mandolin
Glen Duncan twin fiddles
Pat McInerney drums
Jim Hurst and Claire Lynch harmony vocals
- 11. **THESE FLOWERS** (for Paw-Paw)
(Claire Lynch/Universal-Songs of PolyGram International, Inc.-Butter and Egg Music, BMI)
- Jim Hurst acoustic guitar
Claire Lynch harmony vocal
- 12. **KEEP MY LOVE THERE** (WHILE I'M GONE) (for Christy)
(Claire Lynch-Irene Kelley/Universal-Songs of PolyGram International, Inc.-Butter and Egg Music, BMI-Secret Garden Music/LLC, ASCAP)
- Jim Hurst acoustic guitar
Missy Raines bass
Larry Lynch mandolin
Glen Duncan fiddle
Rob Ickes Dobro
Keith Little & Claire Lynch harmony vocals



Produced by Claire Lynch.
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Design by Jean-Pierre LeGuillou.
Notes by Jon Weisberger.

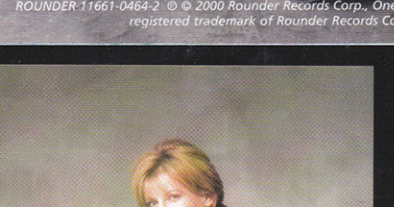
Claire Lynch proudly endorses Elixir Guitar Strings.
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thank you

I wish to thank Jesus for giving me strength for the monumental task He set before me, and for His unspeakable joy in the face of sorrow. I'd like to say to the bluegrass community how proud I am to have been associated with all of you over the past two decades. It's been a warm, comfortable place. Thank you for giving me an identity. To Larry, Missy and Jim . . . thank you for pressing through! What a blessing to be surrounded by strong talent! To Ben Surratt . . . THANK YOU for working with a cheerful heart . . . and SENSITIVE ears! Special thanks to Keith Little - the "blend-meister"! To Ken Irwin . . . I'll never understand why I received your favor . . . but thank you for my albums with Rounder. I commend your musical mission! Thank you to Billy Lynn, Mark Dorminy, Daniel Hill, Katie Dalton - and the Universal Music Publishing Group. Thank you to all of my co-writers on this album (in alphabetical order): Randy Archer, Pamela Brown Hayes, Irene Kelley, Jennifer Kimball, & Jess Leary - for SUPERB talent and craft. Thank you to the songwriters who allowed me to record their songs: Paul Craft, Henry Hipkens, Cadillac Holmes, Fred Koller, Pierce Pettis, Tim Stafford, Bobby Starnes, & Leslie Tucker. To Kegan . . . Congratulations! Go Seniors - 2000! To Christy . . . Keep up the excellence. Keep looking for Truth. Keep my love there while I'm gone. This album is lovingly dedicated to Bill "PawPaw" Lynch who graced our lives with a father's love . . . quiet, understated, obvious. We miss you every day.



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Emotional depth and stylistic breadth defined Claire Lynch's oeuvre in the 1990s. Now, with a Front Porch String Band tempered by years of work together, the International Bluegrass Music Association's 1997 Female Vocalist of the Year has created an album that embodies these qualities with even more skill and intensity than her earlier releases. From the perfect swing of "Stranger Things Have Happened" to the quintessential country of "I Don't Have To Dream" and the bluegrass drive of the title track, *Love Light* is a collection that will inspire and delight with its marriage of ensemble talent and individual artistic vision.
-Jon Weisberger

- 1. I'm Movin' 2:09
- 2. I Don't Have to Dream 3:24
- 3. Love Light 2:33
- 4. Jealousy 3:45
- 5. Missionary Ridge 3:06
- 6. Blue Water Holler 3:00
- 7. Stranger Things Have Happened 3:01
- 8. Savannah 2:48
- 9. He Don't Like to Talk About It 3:02
- 10. Sweethearts Again 3:01
- 11. These Flowers 3:14
- 12. Keep My Love There (While I'm Gone) 2:53

