

Mike Stern's "We All Have Wings" by Audrey Cary

Like his previous albums, Michael Stern's most recent album "We All Have Wings" focuses on kindness, love, and humor. With an arrangement of several instruments and voices, including children's voices, this collection of lighthearted songs will no doubt encourage children to dance, laugh, and "color outside the lines."

All fourteen tracks are bursting at the seams with meaningful themes like finding contentedness in being different, learning to share and be compassionate, and embracing the natural oddities of life and family.

While discouraging meanness and teasing, "Don't Laugh at Me" offers hope to those who are bullied or made fun of. The track "We Can Make a Difference" issues an environmental challenge to children. "A Little Bit of You" illustrates the idea that everyone is special and has something to give the world, whether it is patience, faith, spirit, or joy. Each song is brimming with entertaining life lessons set to music.

The instruments themselves resonate with cheerfulness; the mandolin, dobro, banjo, piano, fiddle, accordion, harmonica, and guitar team with the sweet children's vocals to create a charming composition that is appealing not only to children but to adults seeking youthful, upbeat music.

The music's fun and simplistic edge makes this a wonderful sing-along CD that promotes positive attitudes and choices. With a sound that falls somewhere between folksy and choir hymns, Stern's compilation is interlaced with lyrics that'll make you laugh and music that'll make you dance. Stern sings with enthusiasm and expressiveness, modeling the creativity and energy he encourages children to partake in.

It's obvious that Stern has been inspired by "love all around the world" as he shares his hopes for global harmony and peace. His songs about accepting people with different religions, skin colors, ethnicities, cultures, handicaps, and languages give children the courage to embrace diversity and seek unity. Stern encourages children to be active and thoughtful, patient and imaginative. These songs help to build confidence in children as well as to help develop their social and expressive natures. While kids are still soaking up their surroundings like sponges, these songs will plant hopes for the future and present challenges for today in their bright little minds.