

CLAY AIKEN

JOYFUL NOISE 2005



NEXT WEEK!



**SATURDAY • NOVEMBER 5
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THE MOODY BLUES LIVE

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IT IS LIVE

MUSIC BY MELISSA BEARNS

Alison Brown
7:30 pm, Thursday, 10/27
Jacqua Concert Hall,
\$17/\$20/\$24



Hybrid Bluegrass

Alison Brown's brilliant banjo playin'

It's after 5 pm and Alison Brown is still at her home away from home in Nashville, trying to sneak in an interview between making sure people are getting paid, getting the mail out and making sure things are generally on track. She and her husband, Garry West, founded Compass Records a decade ago and have built a remarkably successful label, releasing more than 200 roots-based albums by musicians people might never have heard of otherwise.

But Brown isn't best known for her business venture, where she's a behind-the-scenes player. It's by taking center stage — making her banjo sing with a feather-light touch, intertwining melodies and harmony in a sparkling waterfall of sound that hums and dances — that she's earned her reputation as one of the hottest, most innovative musicians in hybrid bluegrass. That and winning the title of Banjo Player of the Year in 1991 from the International Bluegrass Music Association and her 2001 Grammy for a duet with Bela Fleck, "Leaving Cottondale."

Her first instrument was guitar but when she was 10, she heard Earl Scruggs (Flatt and Scruggs) playing "Foggy Mountain," fell in love with the sound of the banjo and started playing. After 33 years, she's developed a deft

technical brilliance that allows her to add subtle nuance and inflection to the rapid, rolling melodies that cascade from her strings.

While much of the music on her newest release, *Stolen Moments*, is based in traditional bluegrass, Brown has the magical touch of an alchemist as she swirls in Appalachian, Celtic, roots and even a hint of country. The name of the album is a nod to the challenge of balancing motherhood, work and life. So it seems oddly appropriate that she likes to write her songs in the bathroom. "We just moved but in our old house, the bathroom floor was heated," Brown says. "So I'd write a lot of my music sitting on the bathroom floor. I like the acoustics. It hides all the uglies."

On *Stolen Moments*, each instrument supports the whole sound of each song the way tightrope walkers gracefully hold each other up, alternating with eye-catching flips and jumps, but always returning to a centered point. "I like to think of it as a more feminine way of organizing the music," Brown says. "I have never felt the need to hire a bunch of really great players and then just have them back me up. If you've got Stuart Duncan (fiddle), Sam Bush (mandolin) or John Doyle (piano), then let's hear them play." **EW**

SATURDAY OCTOBER 29TH

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