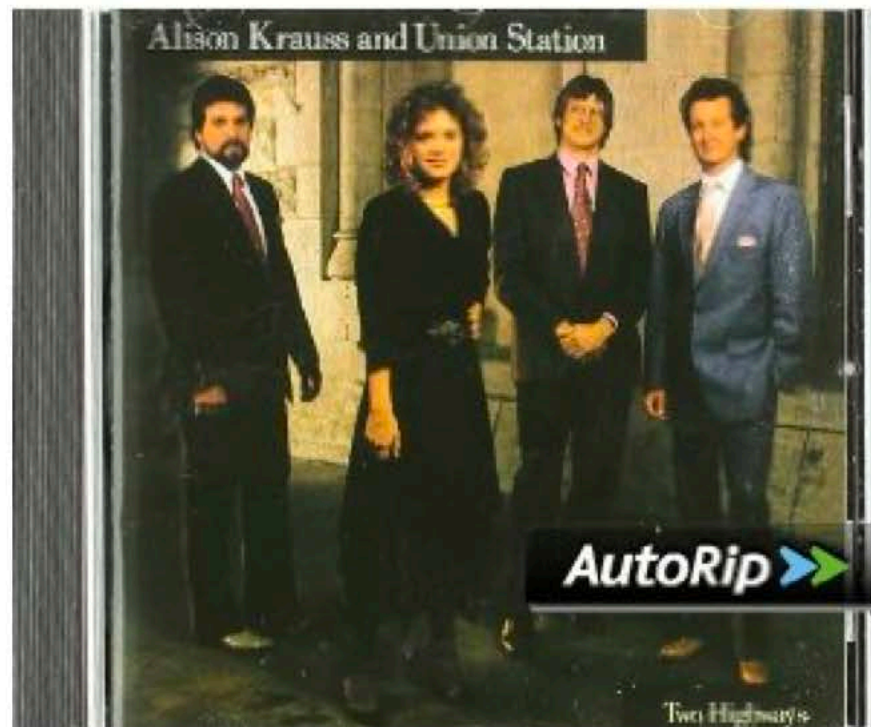


Album Review: Alison Krauss & Union Station – ‘Two Highways’

Posted by Razor X on November 6, 2013

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Alison Krauss' contract with Rounder required her to alternate her solo albums with collaborations with her band. *Two Highways* is the first album under that arrangement credited to Alison Krauss & Union Station. Released in 1989 at a time when bluegrass was still largely regarded as country music's red-headed stepchild, it is by and large a traditional affair. It has little of the genre envelope-pushing for which Alison would later become known, though it is a softer and more polished sound than was typical of bluegrass up to that time. It was produced by Bill Vorndick. Guest artist Jerry Douglas plays dobro along with regular band members Jeff White,

Mike Harman, and John Pennell.

Even though she shares the spotlight with her band members, Alison — who was still only 18 years old when the album was released — is the glue that holds everything together. She plays fiddle throughout the album and sings lead vocals on the majority of the tracks, sounding at times like a young Dolly Parton. The similarity to Dolly is most apparent on the Larry Cordle-penned title track and Todd Rakestraw's "I'm Alone Again".

Bass player John Pennell, who contributed much of the material to Alison's solo album *Too Late To Cry*, supplies three tracks here: "Love You In Vain", "Here Comes Goodbye" and "As Lovely As You", one of the highlights of the album which features Jeff White singing lead vocals with some lovely backing vocals from Alison. Two instrumental numbers — the traditional "Beaumont Rag" and Kenny Baker's "Windy City Rag" allow the band to shine. The album's best track is "Teardrops Will Kiss The Morning Dew", a cover of an old Osborne Brothers song, and the most unusual is a remake of the Allman Brothers' "Midnight Rider", which works surprisingly well with a bluegrass arrangement.

Two Highways did not produce any hit singles, nor did it make the Billboard Top Country Albums chart. It garnered little attention outside the world of bluegrass, but it did receive a Grammy nomination for Best Bluegrass Album in 1990 and it is one of the albums upon which future star Alison Krauss built her reputation.

Grade: A