

of a 1980s Howard Jones song), Camille lays down a groove that clearly invites the talents of Paul Kimble, drummer Michael Cotta, bassist April Sather and lead guitarist Dave Brewer to give their all to the realization of her musical ideas and instincts. Get this CD! Live with it! Memorize it! You'll agree: It will undoubtedly be one of the musical highlights of your 2006! (Bill Fisher)

folk

**CHARLOTTE THISTLE: A GIRL WITH A GUITAR**  
www.agirlwithaguitar.com

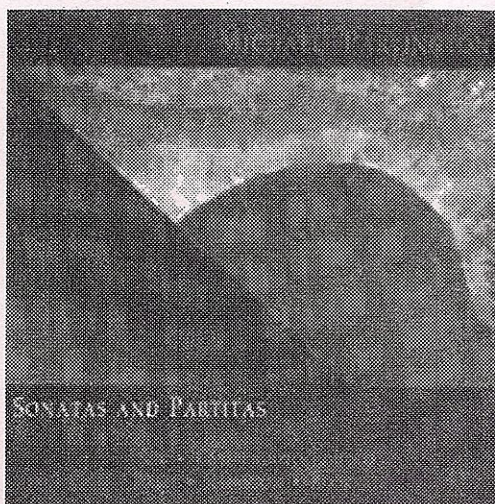
charlotte thistle



Thistles are beautiful, tough, intricate and able to leave deep scratches. Apt stage name, then, for Charlotte Vanderwolf, who's appeared hereabouts for the last couple of years and is out with her first CD. Charlotte may be the most uncompromising lyricist in music today, not only tackling the ever-thorny issues of greed, class and war, but doing so with startling wit, wisdom and bracing directness. In "Mommy, Why?" she asks how come GI Joe's toy grenades and bullets are designed "with the greatest care, while my Barbie has no nipples and no pubic hair." There are no euphemisms in "Reluctant Bride," either - she's at the alter because of a "failed prophylactic." Writing about a maimed soldier in "Semper Fi," Charlotte wants to know why "the DOD gets everything it asks for, but spends so little on those who fight their war." The album contains one instrumental, the beautiful "Final Ascent," which showcases Thistle's clear, muscular and versatile guitar; the entire album is just Thistle and guitar, with just occasional contributions from vocalist Carisa Meisner, Russ Johnson on harmonica, guitarist Doug Zanger . . . and Artis the Spoonman! Overall, this is a great CD by an important new artist. (Tom Petersen)

Classical

**MICHAEL PARTINGTON: SONATAS AND PARTITAS**  
www.michaelpartington.com



Masterfully assured, this collection of classical guitar works will both soothe and invigorate the listener. Michael Partington's repertoire here ranges from Bach to the 20th century and the composers from the latter-Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Rodrigo and Bryan Johanson-prove that: 1. Not all 20th century music is miserably atonal; 2. Yes, one can still break new ground and be engaging using traditional classical forms.

The lack of squeaks is particularly notable, as Partington dances over the frets in the vivo from Castelnuovo-Tedesco's Homage to Boccherini and in the compelling Zapateado from Rodrigo's Three Spanish Pieces. And the Adagio from Johanson's Partita (the premier recording of this work, written for Partington) holds a riddle for the astute listener: Can you find the musical paraphrase of "Louie, Louie" here?

This is a valuable and pleasing addition to anyone's classical guitar library. (Wendy Joseph)

## Blues

**TOM HUNTER: HERE I GO AGAIN**  
FS Music  
www.tomhunter.com

Hunky Tom Hunter is a big sound, big band blues belter with an exciting, unique sound. These days, one segment of modern blues seeks "authenticity" by rubbing everything bleeding raw and throwing gravel in the gears, while another "takes the blues to a new level" with slick, technology-infused, radio ready acts. Hunter harks to a time and a sound where uncompromised authenticity and smooth, state-

of the art showmanship went hand in hand: the late '50s and early '60s, when unassailably genuine blues artists like Big Joe Williams and the Count Basie Orchestra were performing the most exciting jazz and blues, ever, but also had their acts polished to a high gleam. Hunter's booming baritone is drenched with soul and achingly believable, as on tunes such as "Drown in My Own Tears" and "Layin' in the Alley." Hunter is also one rippin' piano player, driving his band with stern authority and never running out of licks. On Here I Go Again, he covers some great standards ("Tenor Madness," for example) and, like the Basie band would, also goes showbiz (Billy Joel's "New York State of Mind"). Hunter pulls these off without breaking stride. Pick up this record and catch him if he comes to town.° (Tom Petersen)

**STEVE MANN: ALIVE AND PICKIN'**  
Bella Roma Music  
BellaRomaMusic.com

He was Jorma Kaukonen's teacher and Erik Frandsen's and Paul Geremia's. He played with Janis Joplin and Dr. John. But after a severe mental breakdown in 1967 Steve Mann disappeared into a series of institutions, leaving behind a couple of out-of-print LPs and a handful of home tapes that to this day have folk-blues guitarists scratching their heads trying to duplicate his astounding technique. In 2003, through the efforts of a few devoted friends, Steve Mann has been released and is living quietly in Berkeley, CA. This CD, drawing on much-copied private tapes from the '60s and one new track, is his first release in 34 years.

The songs recorded with Janis Joplin in 1964 will probably get the most attention. Joplin is in excellent voice on these three traditional blues numbers but the guitar fireworks are elsewhere, in concert recordings from the legendary Ash Grove club in Los Angeles and a 1967 home tape made in San Francisco.

Mose Allison's "If You Live" and the traditional "Mopper's Blues" take the rapid-fire thumb picking of Mance Lipscomb to new heights. The aptly named "Amazing Gospel Tune" transfers Ray Charles' piano style to solo guitar with eerie precision. On "Prison Cell Blues" Mann switches to 12-string guitar with no loss of speed or fluidity. And the original instrumental "Holly" brings back the '60s in all their questing lyricism. (Peter Spencer)