

Western life. In the somewhat tongue-in-cheek "Big Seed Catalog," a ranch woman rides four miles through a blizzard to get the new seed catalog so she can dream of spring and the plants that bloom upon the pages. And, "Little Cowboy Lullaby" is a lovely classic Western lullaby. Of course, the love of horses is a natural theme in a Western album, and Cris adds an elegy to her horse Stiletto in the song "One Wing Through The Wall."

Throughout, the centerpiece of the album is Cris' deeply resonant voice, which is a perfect vehicle for expansive songs about the freedom of the prairie life. Cris is ably backed by her favorite musicians, including of course Nina Gerber on guitar and Julie Wolf on keyboards. The album is a perfect antidote for feeling hemmed in and displaced from home, no matter where that home may be. SS

JOYCE WOODSON
If I Hadn't Seen The West
Radish 63

Very few artists can create an overall sound, or über-motif, that defines a genre and places the listener in that setting throughout a recording. Joyce Woodson is one of the rare artists who works so well in and is so natural with the Western sound that she's become timeless. Be forewarned, if you don't care for the sometimes "hokey" Western sound, this may not appeal to you. In this recording, co-produced with Marty Rifkin, who also contributes steel guitar, they work with seven other musicians to fulfill Woodson's Western vision. As a compliment to Woodson, her eleven originals sound like they could have been collected over the past 80 years. They fit the genre so well it's like reaching into a vault and discovering a tape of great-undiscovered Western classics. Woodson really believes in it and is a part of it. She pretty well sums it up with her song "If I Hadn't Seen The West." She sings a couple of songs inspired by the legendary author of Westerns, Zane Grey, including one dedicated to him. She also pays homage to a pair of lost contemporaries from the West, Al Grierson and Dave Carter, in her song "Davey Get Your Banjo." She has fused the best of her central California upbringing and later years in Nashville, as well as her return to California where she currently resides, into the ideal audio Western travelogue. She certainly sets herself apart from her fellow singer-songwriters. Saving the best for last, her voice just glimmers and glistens like the gold in those Western hills. Woodson always has had a great voice, but she's at her absolute

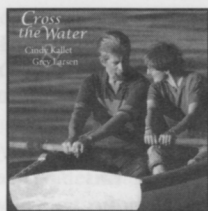
best on this recording. This is yet another CD to slide into the player, sit back and journey toward the Pacific. RWarr

SUSIE BURKE AND DAVID SURETTE
When the Small Birds Sweetly Sing
Madrina 104

Susie Burke is an absolutely wonderful singer. She's got a great voice and great sense of phrasing, with those qualities equaled by the virtuoso-level instrumental talents of her husband, David Surette, on guitar, mandolin, bouzouki and cittern.

Among the highlights of this collection are "Fashioned in the Clay," Elmer Beal's inspirational song about finding hope in difficult times, "Hurting Sure," a beautiful song written by Mark Simos about recognizing the importance of love, even when it's seemingly lost, and Chris Leslie's "My Love is in America," a ballad about separation sung by a lover left behind in the Old World when the other half of the couple is in the New World. The singing and playing, throughout the album, is never less than first rate.

I have no problem in recommending this CD. It is, truly, a very good album. But it's just not as good as their previous release, *Sometimes in the Evening*, which truth be told, had a stronger selection of material, a bit more of an edge and took more chances. Because they are interpretive artists not bound to original material, and because their last album set such a high standard, I was mildly disappointed in the overall strength of this release. Bear in mind that if I didn't have *Sometimes in the Evening* to compare it to, I'd be raving about this collection as an unqualified triumph. It's like a ball player who hits a game winning grand slam in one game and then *only* hits a home run in the next. MR



CINDY KALLET AND GREY LARSEN
Cross The Water
Sleepy Creek 105

Cross The Water is the first full CD joint effort between Cindy Kallet and Grey Larsen who have become life partners as well as musical partners. The caring and affection are readily audible in this recording. The CD alternates between Kallet's

original songs and Larsen's original/traditional tunes. She sings lead and plays guitar, viola, and harmonium while he sings harmonies and plays Irish flutes, tin whistle, Anglo concertina, fiddle, harmonium and guitar. This miniature folk fest of instruments on this self-produced CD keeps the sound varied and interesting. Kallet and Larsen bring nine originals here, and they perform lovely covers of "October Song" by Robin Williamson and "Lull Myself To Sleep" by Dillon Bustin. Larsen sings lead on the latter, which is anything but a lullaby. They add a few traditional instrumentals for balance, including "The Eighth of January / Black Mountain Rag" and "Fisher's Hornpipe / Old Leather Britches." Kallet covers considerable distance with her song "If You Say Yes" as it moves from love song to political statement subtly conveying a powerful message. "Your Love" is a delightfully tongue-in-cheek love song that describes their relationship during time spent apart when they were still touring separately and their time together. The involving closing songs woven together "Cross The Water / Little Girl" fit nicely in Kallet's mind, but seem an odd pair to the listener. They are the most "vintage" Kallet on the CD. Larsen's instrumentals contribute just the right texture and spice to the recording. Perhaps the real charm here lies in its gentleness and subtlety. Kallet's soothing alto voice and Larsen's impressive, versatile musicianship carries you along on a floating musical journey. If the stresses of the world wear you down, relax and recharge by sitting in an easy chair and listening to Kallet and Larsen. No one else in the folk world sounds quite like them. RWarr

SONIA AND DISAPPEAR FEAR
tango
Disappear 1012

Proudly embodying her lifelong commitment to a world without fear, Sonia Rutstein (with musical partner Laura Cerulli) fearlessly reimagines her own music on *tango*, a collection of new and previously-recorded songs sung in Spanish, Hebrew, Arabic, and English and set to Latin and Middle-Eastern rhythms. The combination of languages reflects the album's ambition – to break down political and national boundaries by breaking down linguistic barriers (the name *tango* was chosen because it is a word that has the same meaning in all four languages). It also is the result of SONiA's eye-opening visit to the Middle East in 2006, when she stayed in bomb shelters, kibbutzim and Palestinian villages and camps. That experience gave this album,