

ART EDELSTEIN ANNOUNCES THE 2006 TAMMIE AWARDS

By Art Edelstein

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It's time again to award the albums and musicians whose performances are the best of the best for Vermont music in 2006. We introduced the Tammies – Times Argus Grammys – last year and for this year there is a completely new list of winners.

And now to the awards. The envelopes, please.

Best Singer

Taryn Noëlle, who splits her time between Manhattan and Stowe, released her first album, "On My Way to You," in 2006. This CD of jazz and pop love songs showcases a beautiful voice and a growing talent. Her considerable vocal abilities were backed by the equally talented piano playing of Montpelier-native Joe Davidian. For those wanting an intimate sophisticated evening of soft candlelight with voice and piano keeping the mood going this is the CD to own.

Best Instrumental Album

Gabe Halberg of Plainfield and Mac Ritchey from Hampton Falls, N.H., collectively known as 35th Parallel, win the award in this category for a very exotic sounding CD "Crossing Painted Islands." Halberg on percussion and Ritchey on a variety of stringed instruments are accompanied by a jazz horn section. This duo produced an album that weaves Indian ragas, Armenian folk music, and Turkish rhythms together in a delightfully offbeat musical adventure with incursions into the East. This duo is unique and this CD should be high on anyone's World Music list.

Best Rock Album

The Larry Dougher Band, a power trio of guitar, bass and drums produced a blues CD, "Let Me

Stay," that rocks. So adept is Dougher on guitar that the music he writes and sings could turn any local club into a Vermont version of a smoky Chicago Blues club (sans the smoke.) Dougher, who graduated from Windsor High School, along with bassist Mike Fralish and drummer Bobby Gagnier, are impressive in this set of guitar-driven songs. Dougher's is a name to watch in the George Thorogood and the Destroyers vein.

Best Country Album

Rusty Romance released "Who Bought the Fun?" early in the year, and this CD by Montpelier's resident country band remains a winner. Listening to the CD brought back the country music of the 1970s in all its twanging glory along with the memories of flat beer, stale smoke, and a hankering for Merle Haggard. This is a group that doesn't take itself too seriously, writes good songs, plays reasonably well and has no aspirations beyond giving Vermonters a good time. If today's country music has become too complicated or political for you, Rusty Romance is the band to listen to.

Best Traditional Album

The Bluegrass Gospel Project released "Makes You Strong," its fourth disc, in five years. This band, with local favorite lead singers Patti Casey (solo and in groups) and Paul Miller (formerly with Coco and the Lonesome Road Band) could win in categories as wide ranging as Bluegrass, country, or religious music, if they existed. The 12 tracks on this CD contain fine lead vocals and harmonies, excellent instrumentals and a nice choice of material. This band, in this reviewer's opinion, is the best Bluegrass band currently calling New England home.

Best Song

Talk about a tough category to pin down. There are so many wonderful songs written by Vermont musicians that this can be a very subjective category. However, I have winnowed down the list and chose a song written by a Vermonter who did not release an album this year. The song appears on an album by another Vermont musician. The song is "Wilderness Road" written by Pete Sutherland of Monkton. Colin McCaffrey recorded it for his solo CD, "Tired of Town," released earlier this year.

What makes this song shine is the wonderful story of a Vermonter fighting in the Civil War. It is a musical "Cold Mountain." McCaffrey brings it to life with stirring fiddle, and mandolin instrumentals backing his vocal and guitar presentation. At over eight minutes long, it is indeed a musical novella.

Sutherland said he wrote the song several years back in a period of four months. He appreciates McCaffrey's rendition. "One of the most satisfying things is to have people like your music enough to record it, there are so many great songs written."

For "Wilderness Road," Sutherland said he "knew the arc of the war and scenery, and I had a picture in my mind.

"What attracts me to history is the parallel between these times in Iraq and the Civil War," he explained. "We are sending Vermonters off in per capita numbers to fight and die."

Most Inspiring Performance

This is a special category that is being awarded to Paula Gills for her CD "Living On." It had been over 20 years since Gills' last album of songs, so it came with pleasure and surprise when "Living

On" was released. This album is both heartfelt and sincere with lovely vocals and interesting songs. Welcome back Paula!

Best Album of 2006

The liner photo shows a graying, thinning man holding a Gibson Mastertone banjo, leaning next to a stacked woodpile. This could be but one Vermonter and one musician – Vergennes' based "Banjo" Dan Lindner. His album "Mystery and Memories" is the best album produced by a Vermonter in 2006.

Lindner is the elder statesman of Vermont Bluegrass music. His authenticity of style is second to none, and for 35 years his name has been synonymous with bluegrass music as her performs with his group The Mid-Nite Plowboys.

Lindner is a prolific songwriter, longtime band-leader, warm-toned singer, and an all-around musical statesman.

On this new CD, the third in his cycle of "Songs of Vermont," Lindner has written story songs and historical ballads that should wind up on both the music and history shelves in Vermont bookstores, and on the stacks at the Vermont Historical Society. The songs distill historical and quixotic Vermont events, and tales of odd local characters, horses and best-loved pets into short, easily accessible stories. The setting is primarily Bluegrass and folk and Lindner has enlisted members of the Mid-Nite Plowboys, assorted singers, the Russian Duo, the Vermont Youth Orchestra String Quartet, the Social Band and storyteller Willem Lange to join him in the production. This is a musical magazine that all Vermonters, young and old, farmer and database developer can enjoy.