



KSUT Public Radio has released its fifth “Roots & Rhythms” CD, and like the last four past years, this compilation of in-studio performances is an eclectic treasure.

The CD showcases 20 artists who visited the station’s studio in Ignacio and then laid down a live track after being interviewed.

What sets this CD apart is the variety of musicians. Past albums included more familiar musicians and bands – those music-lovers in the Four Corners are accustomed to seeing in concert and who

also give KSUT its signature sound. It’s at times bluegrass, roots-rock, alt-country and folksy – typical and reliable. And it’s a mix of musical veterans and newcomers either by age or by geography.

Take, for example, April Verch, who on track 7 plays “A Riverboat’s Gone/Bumblebee in a Jug.” The Canadian fiddler is a vibrant young musician, holding steadfastly to her roots in the northern part of her native country. But listeners don’t need to pay any mind to where she hails from because this all-instrumental track could just as easily be coming from Appalachia. Verch can blend tradition and region well with her elegant fiddle phrasing. It’s a standout track on the CD. The song builds tempo as it goes along, rising to a frenetic pace at the end that I’m certain will have many listeners quickly pressing the rewind button. (Some of you might have been impressed by Verch pre-KSUT CD because she played at the 2010 Olympics opening ceremonies in Canada.)

Coming on the heels of Verch’s track 7, Band of Heathens on track 8 stands apart for its much slower pace and somewhat depressing lyrics of “What’s this World” (at least in comparison to what preceded it). The Austin, Texas-based band is known for being rootsy but also able to bring

the rock when they play live. This in-studio track is solid, and a little slow, but stick with it. It's what makes this CD worth the variety.

Tennessee-based band Black Lillies play "Two Hearts" on track 3. The band twangs and rocks, and does so solidly for a band only a few years old.

Tom Pryor's handy work on the dobro keeps the tempo at the right pace to dig the rustic, gritty sound that, with initial exposure to the band, seems to give the band its mark.

The awesome addition to this CD – and maybe even the highlight of the whole thing – is track 11 "Dogs of Santiago," played by Lipbone Redding & The LipBone Orchestra. Redding's sing-song way of telling a story with a slinky New York blues sound is what made this chart-topping radio original so popular. Don't eschew it because of its ample radio time. Redding's talent brings a steady but catchy groove to this tune while using his own lips to simulate a trombone (seriously, there is no trombone in this getup despite what your ears tell you).

Janiva Magness, who sings "The Devil is an Angel Too" on track 9, adds a strictly blues angle to this CD. The song, from her CD of the same name that is a chart-topper, will capture all kinds of music listeners. Her voice is big, her inflections sultry and her presence, even if only on a CD, comes across as saucy – all making for a welcome, different addition to Roots & Rhythm 5.

There are notable familiars Los Lonely Boys (jangly, spicy country) on track 19, and The Gourds' likeable organic sound on track 20 "Country Love" holds up even in the studio given that this band is known for being best enjoyed live. Repeat appearances by Eliza Gilkyson and Maura O'Connell will also bring repeated listeners to this CD.

KSUT and, in particular, the CD's executive producer, Stasia Lanier, has pulled together a product that is again worthwhile, from song selection to cool packaging. Sound quality is superb – and that's important if you know exactly how small that studio is (probably not big enough for Lipbone Redding to play a real trombone) and how humble the Southern Ute Tribe-owned entity is in its operations.

It also shows that there is no lack of talent that makes its way through the Four Corners. That KSUT started permanently capturing that several years ago is a brilliant idea that radio listeners hope has staying power through another five compilations.

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