

# W - THIS - WEEK

## A Morning Wakeup And A Toe Tapping Afternoon

### REVIEW

by Dawn Gustafson

From the moment I heard the first notes of the fiddle and accordion I liked Rick & The Ramblers new CD "I Rode The Ti." Led by one of Vermont's most well-known musicians, Rick Norcross, the Ramblers are a western swing band featuring some of the finest musicians and vocalists in Vermont. Norcross, who grew up in East Hardwick and now lives in Burlington, has been in the music business for 45 years, the past 25 as leader of this band.

Norcross plays rhythm guitar and sings, and although his voice is not particularly strong, it has a pleasing, kind of mellow quality to it. He has found a gem in singer Taryn Noelle. She is also a member of the jazz vocal trio The Blue Gardenias, who are guest vocalists on the CD. The other members of The Blue Gardenias are Amber deLaurentis and Juliet McVickers. The other musicians on the CD are Charlie MacFadyen on piano and accordion, Dono Schabner, vocals and lead and rhythm guitar, Doug Reid, fiddle (who also plays with another excellent northern Vermont Swing Band, The Slant Six Swing Band), Chris Wright, vocals and bass, and Rachel Bischoff, drums.

"I Rode The Ti" contains 12 songs, six written by Norcross. You've got high energy swing tunes, love songs and ballads. The songs all have a special significance for Norcross, and he writes about what he knows and loves. In the song "What Goes Around" he writes about leaving home at a young age to see the world and eventually realizes the values and life back home are what it's all about.

"Winter up in Hardwick, it's always frigid cold.  
It's been that way since long before

the Town House got this old  
But we get through those icy blasts  
We actually boast  
That it's neighbor helping neighbor  
that keeps us warm as toast.

Norcross has a wonderful sense of humor, which is reflected in his choice of songs for this CD, other people's as well as his own. I was surprised to hear the words to that very first song as they are from a traditional called "My Bonnie," which I remember singing as a child. He got this particular swing version from a group called "The Light Crust Doughboys." And speaking of surprises, he wrote a song called "Surprise! Surprise! Surprise!" which is about those not so good surprises.

"Up steps your lovely faithful wife of  
27 years  
She has a letter in her hand  
she's holding back the tears  
My dear old uncle died last week  
I can't believe it's true  
He left me 20 Million bucks  
and now I'm leaving you."

The title cut "I Rode The Ti" was written from Norcross' personal experience of riding on the 220 foot sidewheel steamer the Ticonderoga. He rode the Ti both under steam and on its last voyage on Nov. 6 1954 to where it now sits at the Shelburne Museum. This is a great historical piece of music.

"I Rode The Ti" has become my new favorite CD to listen to on my way to work. There's nothing like a great swing tune like "Right or Wrong" to wake you up in the morning. And if you like the tune "Route 66" you'll either love or hate Norcross' Vermont version, "You're In Heaven Driving Up Route 7".

"I Rode The Ti" is available in Vermont record stores and online at CDBaby, DigStation, iTunes and will soon be available through the Shelburne Museum, Vermont State Parks and Rick & The Ramblers web sites.