

GINA VILLALOBOS

Rock N Roll Pony

Kick

Gina Villalobos' music at first seems so simple and straightforward that it almost doesn't fit anywhere in today's rigidly-compartmentalized music world. She offers a singer-songwriter sensibility but a five-piece band sound. The music is too hard for folk-rock and too soft for hard rock. There's an undercurrent of Americana in what she does, but only an undercurrent. It's straight-up rock, rooted but not roots music, with a twang and plenty of rough edges — in the same ballpark as, say, the "Honky Tonk Women"-era Stones but with a markedly different feel.

It stands out because she's a superb singer with one of those "wet" voices that can be raspy or smooth, and that can go from sensuous purr to stray-cat yowl (and points between). All as she's singing nonlinear, non-narrative lyrics that string together images and catch-phrases along the lines of "I think I'll stand in the window just to stripe in the morning sun/I think I'll fly to November, count the shapes from high up above" (from "Why").

Her songs of melancholy and disillusionment, buoyed by a defiant streak, usually connect emotionally no matter how abstract they get. They also hold together because at bottom she has a genuine pop flair, and employs abundant lyric and musical hooks. This is intriguing stuff, full of heart and hard knocks. — JOHN MORTHLAND

NO DEPRESSION • SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2004

THIS AIN'T NO RAG, IT'S AN ALL-COUNTRY (WHATEVER...) BIMONTHLY

#53 • SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2004 • \$4.95 U.S./\$7 CAN.

NO DEPRESSION

BUDDY MILLER • MAVIS STAPLES • TIFT MERRITT • JASON RINGENBERG • CAMPER VAN