



Gary Allegretto & Ian Espinoza
Allegretto / Espinoza
 Lightning Strike Records,
allegrettoespinoza.com

Gary Allegretto and Ian Espinoza have been musical pals for a good 20 years, and the ease with which they mesh together is apparent right from the CD's opening song, "First Rodeo." Allegretto is a well-known harmonica player with an incredible original style and Espinoza is a virtuoso guitarist. And the addition of fiddle, bass, and mandolin rounds out their sound just right.

Their debut album features a mix of nine original compositions by both artists, as well as four covers. The lively blend of diverse instrumental and vocal treatments keeps the CD sounding fresh clear through—especially thanks to Espinoza's 1930s National Steel resonator guitar and Allegretto's blues-tinged harp playing.

"I listen to old, old, stuff that goes back to Alan and John Lomax' recordings—that's my biggest influence," says Gary. "That's the real cowboy stuff because it came from the very roots of the music. And a lot of that comes from a blues-roots influence. Cowboy music was started when the harmonica was



introduced to the West around 1860. As many as a third of the drovers driving cattle north from Texas were black guys. And they were playing basically what they were playing on the plantations—which was the blues."

Allegretto is also a humanitarian. In the mid-'80s he volunteered to play for children in hospitals and saw that they were really drawn to the harmonica.

Since 1985, Espinoza has

taught over 20,000 physically, emotionally, and economically challenged kids around the world—everywhere from disaster camps in Haiti, Sumatra, and Louisiana to Ronald McDonald Houses, burn recovery centers, juvenile detention homes, and orphanages.

Allegretto / Espinoza is a quality Western CD put out by quality people who truly embody cowboy values. —Charley Engel

Reviews

MUSIC



Charlie Ewing
Buffalo Horses
 Mama Cow Music,
charlieewing.com

It's always a delight to come across a real musical gem. Maybe it's the semi-isolated ranch life he leads in Alberta, Canada, but Charlie Ewing's is a rare original voice in a sea of wannabe Western artists.

It took seven years for Ewing to release his second CD, *Buffalo Horses*, but the wait was worthwhile. His lyrics, melodies, and musicianship are first-rate examples of modern Western composition, and his songs communicate his passion for music and the rural lifestyle. Perhaps it was growing up with the songs of Pete Seeger, Burl Ives, Joan Baez, and Gordon Lightfoot, but whatever the reason, Ewing has a decidedly inclusive approach to his cowboy compositions. For 12 tracks, the listener is treated to a multi-textured grab bag of songs that perfectly meld folk, blues, old-timey, swing, and Celtic influences. —Charley Engel



Eli Barsi
Portrait of a Cowgirl
 Red Truck International Records,
elibarsi.com
 Eli Barsi is a product of the Saskatchewan prairie, and its wild landscape courses through her every performance. It has left an indelible impact on her songwriting, including the importance of family. "I wrote the title song about my mom, who is the epitome of a true cowgirl: strong, patient, and tough." —C.E.



Ian Tyson
All the Good 'Uns Vol. 2
 Stony Plain Recording Co.,
iantyson.com
 After six decades of recording and performing live, Ian Tyson is not just a Western artist—he is the Western artist. *All the Good 'Uns Vol. 2* covers his career between 1999 and 2012 and is a fantastic place to start if you're new to the institution that is Ian Tyson. —C.E.



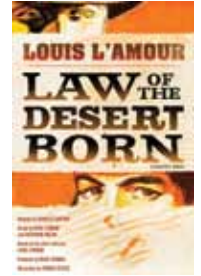
Allan Chapman
Western Folk: Songs From the Prairie
 Chili Records,
allanchapman.net
 Texas singer-songwriter Allan Chapman has released another insightful collection that breathes life into authentic Western characters. "This CD is dedicated to the everyday stories of the people of the West, past and present." —C.E.



Mary Kaye
The Dawn and the Dusk
 Don't Fence Me In Records,
marykayeknaphus.com
 Mary Kaye has Western roots that go six generations deep, and her newest release does that history proud. "As a Western artist, my wings are these songs; they connect you to all that is best about the West and all that stirs a cowboy's soul." —C.E.

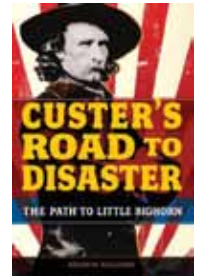
new releases

BOOKS



Law of the Desert Born: A Graphic Novel
 Adapted by Charles Santino, Illustrated by Thomas Yeates
 Bantam,
randomhouse.com

This first graphic novel adaption of a L'Amour Western explores the themes of revenge, loyalty, family, and justice against the backdrop of New Mexico's borderlands. The novel's illustrations add a new dimension to an already gripping tale. —Lauren Feldman



Custer's Road to Disaster
 By Kevin M. Sullivan
 TwoDot,
globepequot.com
 General George Armstrong Custer is an enigma. Considered a tragic military hero and a vainglorious fool, he simultaneously inspires respect and disgust. Custer's persona has achieved mythic proportions, and *Custer's Road to Disaster* compellingly investigates the icon's life to uncover the unusual mental and emotional makeup of such a controversial figure. —L.F.