

THE ATTACK OF WOMEN WITH GUITARS

Women have been making steady inroads into what was once an almost exclusively male domain—guitar playing. Only a few gals played guitar in the old days, Memphis Minnie and Sister Rosetta Tharpe being the most prominent in the blues world. In country music, Maybelle Carter's innovative guitar playing style became a hallmark of The Carter Family.

About halfway through the first blues century, women who played electric guitar began to emerge, led by the inexorable Bonnie Raitt. Bonnie's warm, sensuous slide guitar has been a favorite ever since her first album in 1970. Other guitar women who rate attention from that time include; Joni Mitchell, Joan Jett, and Nancy Wilson.



Ana Popovic

blues from previous collaborations with B.B. King and others. Lesser known are her abilities as a blues guitarist and pianist. She is also proficient on several other instruments, which she demonstrates on her first blues CD, a production she says she's wanted to do for a long time. Armatrading played all the instruments except the drums, sang all the vocal parts and wrote all the songs for the album. It's a scintillating journey into Armatrading's blues experience and should please her other fans as well.

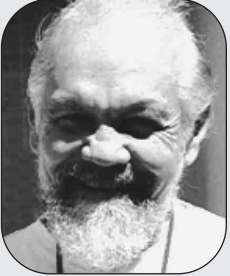
In the last two decades, a larger number of women blues guitarists have gained prominence including; Rory Block, Melissa Etheridge, Ellen McIlwaine, Joanna Connor, Barbara Lynn, Debbie Davies, Fiona Boyes, Sue Foley and Susan Tedeschi.

But now comes the 21st Century, ready or not, and with the new decade comes another flock of outstanding guitarists who sometimes wear skirts. Here are a few of the outstanding albums released this year:

First is, "Into The Blues," by Joan Armatrading. We know that Joan can sing the

BLUES SEGUES

BY NORMAN DAVIS



From Seattle, Alice Stuart sends her latest CD, "Freedom." Stuart is in top form again with some excellent riffing on acoustic and electric guitars. She also wrote most of the songs.

Canadian blues guitar ace Roxanne Potvin released her solo album, "The Way It Feels," earlier this year. Roxanne saw a video of young Jonny Lang when she was 15 and it gave her the blues bug big time. She bought her first guitar and now at age 23, shows amazing poise and talent as she moves into the international spotlight.

Potvin also appears on another album from the same label, RUF Records, with two more fem guitar stars, Deborah Coleman and Sue Foley. RUF seems to be doing more than any other label now to record women in blues. The label's 2005 CD, "Blues Guitar Women" features about 30 women players, contemporary and traditional.

California's Laurie Morvan is getting critical raves for her new release, "Cures What Ails Ya." "Morvan boasts a strong and limber voice, an affinity for bending notes on guitar and a flair for writing songs," reports *Downbeat* magazine.

And an album that blew me away this year. Produced by and starring Ana Popovic, a comely blonde with fire in her eyes. Popovic grew up in Serbia, during its worst years, when you might run into a machine gun around any corner. The passion she expresses in her writing and performing is extraordinary. *Guitar Player* said, "Ana is a superb singer and songwriter who can flat-pick fluid jazz lines, craft deep-pocket slide grooves, and bend strings with SRV-style emotion." *Jazz News* implied that Popovic is the reincarnation of Jimi Hendrix. The album is aptly called, "Still Making History."

Women guitaristas have not reached equality in numbers, with their gender opposites. They may never achieve that due to the inherent difference in arm strength (about 45%). But in the talent department, we now have proof that there's no gender advantage in the playing of blues on electric guitar.

Norman Davis hosts Midnight Flyer Saturday mornings on KEGR-FM, Concord, CA; and Thursday evenings on KKIT-FM, Taos, NM. Both stations have streaming audio. Contact Norman at his website: www.radiothrills.com/midnightflyer.htm.



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