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Record review

BY MARGARET MOSER



The Texas Sapphires

Valley So Steep (Lowe Farm)

With Rebecca Lucille Cannon riding herd as sweetheart of the rodeo and Billy Brent Malkus' cowboy soul, the Texas Sapphires burst out of the chute with their debut CD, *Valley So Steep*. Dealing out reinvigorated classic country in 11 original compositions, plus an ace version of Gram Parsons' "Las Vegas," the Sapphires lay down a full house. Small wonder they staked their claim as Best New Band in the recent Austin Music Awards or that they landed shows with Ray Price and Dwight Yoakam. The local quintet wears its genre like an old pair of spit-shined boots on "Bring Out the Bible (We Ain't Got a Prayer)," "Cold Silver Ring," and "Driftin' In," thanks to producer Lloyd Maines' suedecloth touch. "Ladyfest, TX" suggests the Carter Family doing pickup gigs with Porter and Dolly. Malkus and Cannon are ably assisted by bandmates Jeff Joiner, Paul Schroeder, and Ram Zimmerman, with guests such as Kim Deschamps and fiddler Warren Hood. Given Nashville standards, country music should be safe for the iPod world. With *Valley So Deep*, the Texas Sapphires buck that system like a nicotine-patched bronco.

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