

TONI BROWN

Blue Morning

(Relix Records)

After years of writing about those who make music, *Relix Magazine* publisher, Toni Brown, has finally tried her hand at it.

Brown captures the sweet, pure country rock sound of early seventies California on her debut release **Blue Morning**. On this collection of ten songs, Toni surrounds herself with some great musicians, including Jorma Kaukonen and Michael Falzarano of Hot Tuna, David Nelson of New Riders of the Purple Sage and Jerry Acoustic Band fame, and a great New York duo called the Nudes.

Produced by Falzarano, the project's cover art, a skeleton sitting next to a palm tree looking over a very blue ocean at sunrise, was created by Gary Komnan.

Brown's warm and friendly vocals are both ear-appealing and kind. Her tracks are festive and pure. The psychedelic blend of country rock that permeates this album, bring to mind the music of the Flying Burrito Bros., the Byrds, Gram Parson's Fallen Angel Band and of course, the New Riders. **Blue Morning** also seems inspired in many ways by the Grateful Dead classics **American Beauty** and **Workingman's Dead**.



Brown has recorded six original compositions, reworked a Burrito's classic, and covered three Dead favorites.

Her originals are genuine stand outs. The song-writing is honest, romantic and versatile. The title cut is a straight up country rocker, while the delightful "Double Shot of Tequila" has a trippy new age thing goin' on. I love the bongos! "Stars" is a jazzy little groove that features some great improv by the band, and "I Remember" features Toni along with the Nudes - Stephanie Winters and Walter Parks - on some great three part vocal harmonies.

I was especially fired up by Brown's rendition of "The Wheel." The steel guitar intro by Barry Sless was totally sweet and Toni's vocals wrapped around me and took me to a warm, safe place. The up tempo version of "Morning Dew" was very fat, highlighted by a rippin' Jorma solo. "Box of Rain" brought back special memories of the last GD show.

All and all, **Blue Morning** is great fun with animated performances by Toni and the band, clean production and cool artwork. The liner notes point out that this CD is dedicated to the memory of Jerry Garcia and inspired by the Grateful Dead and Robert Hunter. Right on!

(Rating: 8)

-Eric Lambert

