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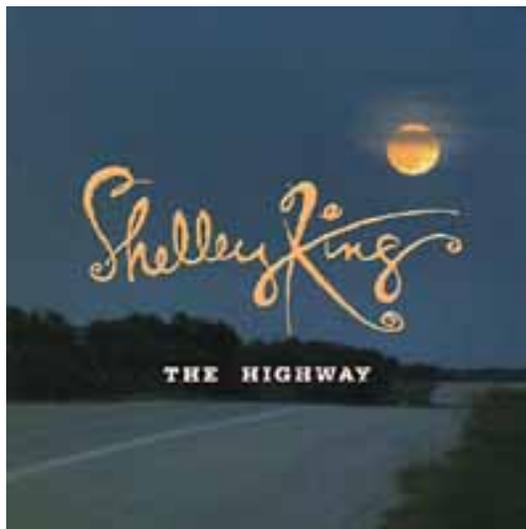
Girlie Action

Phases and Stages

BY [MARGARET MOSER](#)

April 26, 2002:

Here's a story of irony and persistence: **Shelley King** toiled locally for the past few years and won a bittersweet victory last month by taking Song of the Year at the Austin Music Awards while simultaneously being rejected for a SXSW showcase. Her prestigious songwriter award benefited in no small part from Toni Price recording King's "Call of My Heart" and "Who Needs Tears" for *Midnight Pumpkin*, which took Album of the Year, but King's win came down to one thing: She's a talented songwriter. That standard of excellence holds high on her second CD, *The Highway* (www.shelleyking.com). King's songwriting is ripe and bursting with flavors from country to Tex-Mex to zydeco ("The Highway," "Crescent City," "Texas Blue Moon," and "Running Out of Blue"), filled with delicious melodies, sometimes tart lyrics, and promises of good things to come. King's next stop should be opening



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for Lucinda Williams or even Willie Nelson. King's latest LP didn't spend as long in my hope-to-review pile as many of the mostly label-free local women included here. **Joanna Ramirez's** *Satisfy Me*, for example, is over a year old, but it didn't get its push until last fall. If Angela Strehli had a younger sister, she'd sound like Ramirez, whose bluesy, sensual style is a comfortable mix of original ("Out of Tears," "Satisfy Me") and traditional ("Same Old Blues," "All Around the World"). **Rebecca Cole's** *Drink the Rain* features Carolyn Wonderland, and they sing up a gospel storm that reaches the heavens ("Sit Down Servant," "Prayer"), while raising a little hell. **Jennifer Koury** pounds up her own storm on the keyboards. Unfortunately, her well-produced *Colors of My Vision* is distinguished neither vocally nor musically, as if she were a session player finally going solo. **Catherine Berry's** *Geography* (Blind Hit Records, www.catherineberry.com) is likewise unremarkable, more so for the lack of power in her soft vocals. Still, there's something both in Koury and Berry's introspective music that warrants watching their growth. **Cowgirl Sue** (aka Suze Raff) lassos Sara Hickman territory with *Giddyup/Whoa* (www.cowgirlsue.com), a wake-up/wind-down CD for kids. It's a rollicking effort that makes the adult listener wish for something more mature to frame her beautiful voice. **Brigitte London** is getting local airplay with *Untravelled Road* (www.brigittelondon.com). It's on the pop side of country, but with enough substance to place her squarely in the up-and-comers corner. **Mary Welch's** *Visions of You* (South Congress Records; www.marywelch.com) plays it safe, showcasing her pretty voice with a little of everything from country-tinged originals to the Beatles. It's charming, pleasant fare, but sometimes you wish she'd stick to one or two genres and skip the variety. *Mwhaha* (www.catscratch.cjb.net) is the nine-song CD from **Catscratch**, the local teen grrl trio whose energetic performances are captured with exuberant élan here. They'll be veterans by age 18, and if they keep up the chutzpah and girl-power attitude ("Mohawk Boyfriend," "Thank You Mom"), the future's not only bright, it's loud and fast.

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