

## NEWHOUSE PUBLISHING

By Kevin O'Hare

Singer Vonne explores numerous styles on 'Firebird'

Patricia Vonne "Firebird" (Bandolera Records) 4 stars.

With her perfect mix of Tex-Mex firepower and a distinctive, bilingual vocal style that's both sultry and scorching, it's easy to forget that Patricia Vonne spent plenty of years in New York.

Yet her childhood home was in San Antonio, and she earned her stripes in the ultra-competitive Austin music scene. Together with her husband Robert LaRoche, she's established a serious roots rockin' career, not only in Texas and elsewhere in the U.S., but also in Europe, where she's been widely acclaimed thanks to a relentless touring schedule.

On her third album, "Firebird," Vonne builds on the promise of previous efforts like her eponymous 2002 debut and the rock-solid 2005 release "Guitars and Castanets."

Here she solidifies her sound, a gritty mix of torch 'n' twang, deep border radio roots, a powerhouse voice that won't quit and a straightahead approach to songwriting that blends a myriad of sounds, from the fiddle-backed, heartland echoes of "Will We Ever Be," to the far more urgent "Missing Women," a song about the hundreds of disappeared or murdered women of Juarez, Mexico, which also shows up here in its Spanish-language version "Mujeres Desaparecidas."

Vonne explores a lot of different styles on "Firebird," delving into Los Lobos' land for the upper-octave beauty "Hot Rod Heart," winding her way into more exotic terrain on "Torera," and taking on the West Coast twang time territory of the steady-building, harmony-filled LaRoche-Vonne composition "The Dogs Dance."

The disc builds solidly throughout, peaking with the flat-out rockin' "Dutch Cigarette," an NRBQ-flavored, roadhouse rockin' cut which proves just how far Vonne can take

her talent. She pairs that brilliantly with the beautiful country of "Karolina," which at first seems way out of her range, before one realizes that this is a woman that can take any kind of material and turn it into her own.

Great stuff, passionately played, exquisitely arranged and meticulously delivered. Vonne has always been a major rising talent, but with "Firebird," there is no doubt that she has come into her own. For purchasing information on the Internet, go to [www.patriciavonne.com](http://www.patriciavonne.com).