

**Take  
Two CDs  
and Laugh  
Your  
Way  
to  
Mental  
Health:  
The  
Therapy  
Sisters  
are  
topical,  
offbeat,  
funny,  
philosophical,  
slightly  
skewed.**

BY EUAN BEAR

It's one of the stranger things I can imagine: two lesbian singer-songwriters from Austin Texas get concert gigs in Vermont. In Middletown Springs. At the town library. I know some lesbians who live in the small hill town southwest of Rutland, but it's just not the first Vermont venue that leaps to mind for traveling dyke troubadors. Their other two appearances – in Bellows Falls and Burlington – seem much more likely.

But then again, one of their most requested songs is "Tying the Knot in Vermont." Therapy Sisters Lisa Rogers (she's the one running for president; check out her platform at [www.therapysisters.com](http://www.therapysisters.com)) and Maurine McLean did just that this year in Brattleboro, 20 years after their first potluck-dinner-commitment-ceremony at home in Austin.

If their October performances measure up to their own promotional material and the disk they sent, they just might be an antidote to the onset of winter gloom.

They call themselves "Austin's Divas of Dysfunction" and who "dispense their medicinal music" at "group sessions." Ticket prices are identified as "copays." Their songs are topical, offbeat, funny and philosophical in a slightly skewed way.

Their latest CD is *Sound Mind*, with thoughtfully odd tunes like "Work Like You Don't Need the Money" and "Nuclear Family Waste" ("What's the half-

life of toxic emotional sludge?"). They've been performing at virtually every women's music and/or comedy festival in the US, along with dozens of colleges, and they've even played the Burlington Coffeehouse before.

*Codependent Christmas*, their previous CD, does justice to that most emotionally conflicted and commercialized holiday. The title tune is a Western swing rendition of a dysfunctional family preparing for the holidays. Then there's "Abraham's Lament," a Jewish view of Christmas hoopla, with "a solo by Yahweh" and klezmer riffs; "The Twelve Days of Analysis," an a cappella take-off on the classic; "Happy Whatever You're Having," an ode to political correctness during winter; "Pachelbel's Tantrum," a glimpse inside the typical American family at Christmas, based on Pachelbel's Canon in D; and "The War of the Lights," a waltzing neighborhood rivalry that ends with alien intervention.

Other songs you might hear include "Therapy Boogie," "Cure for the Common Osama" (suggesting a quick sex-change operation as a fitting resolution) and "Don't Get Even (Get Odd!)." They write in a folk tradition of tongue-in-cheek commentary on current events, and they love it that Vermont passed its civil union law.

There's nothing particularly musically sophisticated here, but the wordplay is clever enough to tickle your funny bone and maybe stick with you later. It's really all about having a good time. When I listened to *Sound Mind*, the duo's close harmonies

**preview**

**The Therapy Sisters**  
October 8, 7:30pm  
Middletown Springs Library  
October 10, 8:30pm  
Oona's Restaurant, Bellows Falls, VT  
October 25, 8pm  
Burlington Coffeehouse

and quirky songs reminded me a lot of very early Betsy Rose and Cathy Winter, but more upbeat.

"Work Like You Don't Need the Money" strings together a series of zen-ish mottos – "dance like no one's watching you, love like you've never been hurt" – with a slightly offcenter set: "laugh like your mother said you can't have any spinach until you finish all your dessert."

"GM" is the tale of another layoff at the auto plant – "me and my buddies will get the boot, it's us on the floor not the ones in the three-piece suit" – while jobs go overseas, and working class heroes begin to question who decided that "what's good for GM is good for the country."

"Control, Alt, Delete" is a complaint in computer terms: too bad life is not as simple as a quick reboot.

"Sticks and Stones" is a sweet bit of advice and comfort for the schoolyard set – and those of us still carrying emotional baggage from that era. "You're rubber, they're glue, it's not what they call you, it's what you answer to"; and "the classroom is not the last room" where people will call you names, "check out

the executive washroom and the typing pool."

Then there's "Old Geezer University," the local community college haven for retired folks following an old dream deferred or exploring a new skill.

The two songs I had the hardest time with initially were "Sleeping Her Way to the Top" and "I Need a Stalker." "Sleeping" is a catty view of the female singer/musician who was given everything she needs to succeed and who treats her entourage like props who had better not get in her way while she's ... If the song suggested any sense of connection or sympathy for the kind of insecurity – or sexism in the music industry – that might produce such behavior, I'd feel better about it. But maybe it's more about grasping ambition and greed, regardless of gender (although I can't say that I've heard about men who sleep their way to the top).

"Stalker" is a light-hearted take on the ultimate in weird celebrity accessories. If you aspire to celebrity, maybe a stalker is just what you need to get your "head shot in the tabloids." It took me a couple of listens to get the mockumentary tone.

If you go to the website, you can get to the lyrics of a few more serious songs, like "The Loss of a Little Girl," who was killed by a drunk driver.

Romance comes out for play, too, with "How Did I Get So Lucky," "It Wouldn't Be Heaven (Without You)," and the aforementioned "Tying the Knot in Vermont" ("We've got lots of love to flaunt, we'll soon be tying the knot in Vermont ... What more could your average lesbian couple want / than to be tying the knot – a little tighter honey / just a little something we learned in Girl Scouts – in Vermont.")

So, if you want to lighten up in the manner of early women's music, pencil in the Therapy Sisters. The dates are October 8 in Middletown Springs (at the library, 7:30), October 10 in Bellows Falls (Oona's Restaurant, 8:30, underwritten by Vermont-based internet service provider SoverNet), and October 25 at the Burlington Coffeehouse (8 pm). ▼

