



## Brilliant Hope, Pointed Politics

BY STACEY HORN

### Little Star Girlyman

Daemon Records, CD

**MUSIC** Girlyman's eagerly-awaited second album is, in the words of the final track, "a little star of brilliant hope." The Brooklyn-based band's three members – Nate Borofsky, Ty

Greenstein and Doris Muramtsu – sing these lyrics in perfectly-tuned three-part harmony over the faintest ringing of pedal steel, their voices blending flawlessly, yet remaining distinct: a characteristically Girlyman moment.

*Little Star*, released last month, follows Girlyman's debut album, *Remember Who I Am* (2003). The band signed with Amy Ray's indie label, Daemon Records, in August of 2004 after

winning a series of honors that year including "Most Wanted to Return" at Falcon Ridge Folk Festival, the Independent Music Award, and the Outmusic Award for Best New Album.

Girlyman's website describes their music as "Delicious Acoustic Harmony-Driven Gender Pop." You can file *Little Star* in the contemporary folk section of your CD collection, but be prepared for forays into pop, country, bluegrass,

even a little jazz and rock. The album features original songs by each member of the band, and lead vocals shift from one member to another both within and among tracks. This collaborative, ensemble sound, which characterized *Remember Who I Am*, is even more powerful on *Little Star*. Band members trade instruments frequently, though most tracks feature Doris on guitar, Ty on percussion and Nate on baritone guitar. Many songs also include a banjo or mandolin. Listen for Julie Wolf, of the Ani DiFranco band, on keyboard and accordion and Joe Dye on pedal steel.

*Little Star* is more overtly political than *Remember Who I Am*. Girlyman's lyrics allude to current events by addressing the broad, underlying issues behind them. In "Young James Dean," Ty sings in the voice of a woman who refuses to conform to 1950s gender roles: "manager said I had to wear that little uniform/said I was part of the problem." The song's lyrics point succinctly to the link between identity and politics: "I guess I'll feel less than real all my life." War is another major theme. In "Commander," the band asks, in haunting, almost taunting harmony, "Did they take you and make you believe it was clear/when they made you commander and you couldn't be it?" Listeners will, no doubt, be reminded of a certain commander in chief, as the band chroni-

cles his past: "When the war came you ran for your life/as your businesses dried."

Many tracks deal with love and confession. Doris's "Speechless" is a love song with a catchy melody, and her "Bird on the Wire" is musically playful, with a slightly strange yet appropriate chord change at the end of the second chorus. Ty's "Genevive" is perhaps the album's sweetest love song, featuring Ty's clear alto voice backed by simple harmony and light instrumentation. Nate's "I Know Where You Are" promises sweetly, "I'll bring you home and carry your shit to the house."

Girlyman's humor and playfulness, coupled with their seriousness about making good music, are winning them a growing number of "girlyfans." Listeners new to the band will want to pick up *Remember Who I Am* along with *Little Star*. Both albums are available nationally in CD format, and *Remember Who I Am* is now on iTunes. Girlyman will hit the folk festival circuit again this summer in their biodiesel-powered van, Bijou. Tour dates and locations are available on their website: [www.girlyman.com](http://www.girlyman.com). ▼

*Stacey Horn is on summer hiatus from teaching collegians writing in preparation for a fall trip to Hungary. We look forward to her notes from abroad.*

## Spanish Fluff and Fun

BY PEGGY LUHRS

### My Mother Likes Women (A Mi Madre Le Gustan Las Mujeres)

Directed by Inés París and Daniela Fejerman  
Spanish/English subtitles  
93 minutes  
Wolfe Video  
([www.WolfeVideo.com](http://www.WolfeVideo.com))

**FILM** Three daughters are visiting with their divorced mother Sofia, a con-

cert pianist. She sits them down and begins to tell them she is in love. The three excitedly begin to question her about "him." Before Sofia gets in a word, the new love shows up at the door and the daughters are shocked to find a woman entering and walking into their mother's arms. Thus begins *My Mother Likes Women*, a recent import from Spain. Although mainly set in Madrid, the most evocative landscapes in the film take place in Prague.

Directed by Inés París and Daniela Fejerman, the film (starring Rosa María Sardà and Leonor

Watling, both in recent Almodóvar films) concentrates on the reactions of the daughters and how they all – mother, lover, daughters, ex-husband, and several boyfriends – come together. It is mostly the story of the three daughters' reaction to learning that their mother's new love is a woman, also a musician. In fact it's mostly about Elvira, who just can't seem to get out of her own way. Her reaction, while not as negative as that of her married sister, is neurotic.

She runs to her therapist obsessing that maybe she too is lesbian, and then she overdoes it with a

new beau to prove her heterosexuality. (It's amazing how in real life too, heterosexuals are so very threatened by the mere presence of queers.) I laughed quite a bit in the first half of the film, especially when sister Sol writes a tell-all song about mom. The sisters plot to break up the loving musicians because they think that Eliska (Eliska Sirová), Mom's Czech lover, is after her money.

Elvira befriends Eliska, and then she betrays the trust. I won't give away the whole fairly thin plot because this is a fun movie if you're not expecting anything too deep. It is Sapphic too in its emphasis on the relationship between the sisters and mother and mother's

lover. The father is in the picture too, mostly as an affable and supportive presence for Elvira. In the second half it takes a somewhat more somber turn, with the necessary bit of plot twist for drama.

This was a bit of fluff not all that lesbian but an enjoyable evening. The Sapphic cinema crowd gave it a thumbs-up, and I'd agree it's a light, fun film with a focus on women. ▼

*Peggy Luhrs is a longtime Burlington lesbian activist who runs "Sapphic Cinema" nights at the R.U.I.2? Queer Community Center.*