



SEVEN DAYS

YES WE DID:
JUDITH LEVINE
ON THE ELECTION
P.24A



reviewthis

RICK & THE RAMBLERS WESTERN SWING BAND, *I RODE THE TI*

(Airflyte, CD)

Rambler Rick Norcross has logged as many celebrated miles as the deluxe steamboats that once frequented the waters of Shelburne Harbor. His journey through an adventurous musical province has lasted the better part of four decades — including a five-year stint as the music writer for *The Tampa Times* in the early '70s. Norcross' career has culminated — for now, anyway — in the October release of *I Rode the Ti*, his third album with longtime pals The Ramblers.

Norcross and his bandmates offer a rustic compilation of distinctive, elemental American swing. The record is split down the middle between six genial originals and six cover songs lauding the titans of the genre, including Texas swing legends The Light Crust Doughboys. So skilled are the collaborators in this Americana vein that the

distinction between originals and covers is easily blurred; every song sounds like a classic.

Rambler fans who caught one of the group's 10 Vermont tour dates this past summer will recognize more than a few selections. Tunes were chosen for the recording according to audience popularity in live shows.

"What Goes Around" is the first Norcross original on the disc. Like the album as a whole, it is brilliantly produced. Norcross' warm croon is layered expertly by The Ramblers throughout, notably the warm-sounding piano of Charlie MacFayden and Doug Reid's somber fiddle. The song lauds the kinship and independence of Vermonters, as well as Norcross' affinity for the Green Mountain State: "The longer I was gone from here / the more I missed my home."

Norcross' greatest talent lies in his ability to adopt a quintessentially American musical style with narratives that celebrate Vermont culture and history. Nowhere is this



more evident than on the record's title track, an homage to the great side-wheel steam ship *Ticonderoga*. The song is complete with the band's halcyon harmonies and offers an informative history of the boat — with which Norcross himself is interestingly intertwined. Rick & The Ramblers embrace this classical form — interpreting rather than reinventing — with an aptitude that will delight modern fans of swing.

JOHN PRITCHARD