

OUR 2006 **SAPPHIRE MOVIE AWARDS**

'D.E.B.S.' • 'Brokeback Mountain' • 'Transamerica' • 'Saving Face'

the word on lesbian lifestyle

# girlfriends

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REVIEWS

**TENDER FOREVER**  
*The Soft and the Hardcore*  
 (K Records, \$14.98)

Need to steal a heart or heal a broken one? Invoke Melanie Valera's solo album *Tender Forever* for all of your Valentine's Day needs. Valera's drum machine beats and sweetly sighing guitar would seduce even the roughest, toughest of ladies. Her voice sways, as if the wind were breaking the silences between beats and recording its own



rhythms. Rumor has it that Valera went from singing to her girlfriend over the telephone to performing with new label-mates, Mirah and Anna Oxygen, when she moved from France to Olympia, Washington, for love. True or not, this album is so full of that squishy stuff you'll feel it in your veins, seeping from your pores. **A** —Courtney Trouble

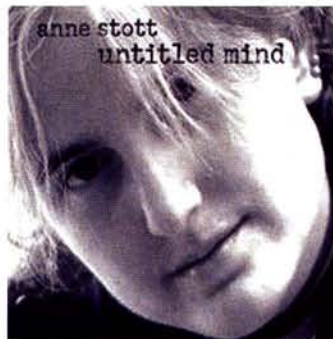
**LA BRUJA**  
*Brujalicious*  
 (Urban Latino, \$12.98)



Spoken word artist, actor, activist, and performer La Bruja, a.k.a. Caridad de la Luz, sears a hole in your headphones with her debut "mixtape" *Brujalicious*. Showcasing her tough-as-nails MC skills, she weaves the voices of *Boogie Rican Blvd*'s characters (her acclaimed one-woman play) into a journey down the streets of the Bronx; hip-hop, reggaeton, and traditional Puerto Rican music styles flow seamlessly from one track to the next. Her inventive and energetic delivery of lyrics and melodies (in English, Spanish, and Spanglish) reflects a lusty but fiercely independent attitude many dykes would admire, though songs like "Mi Gatita Negra" make her heterosexuality clear. Well-known collaborators such as Vivian Green (on "I like it but I don't need it"), Jadakiss, and B-Real round out this impressive release. **A** —Stefani Barber

**ANNE STOTT**  
*Untitled Mind*  
 (Anne Stott, \$12.95)

At first glance it would be easy to label Anne Stott's debut album *Untitled Mind* as typical lesbian acoustic



fare, just another guitar-wielding singer-songwriter whose personal lyrics and semi-folky style would forever relegate her to coffee shop gigs. But luckily Anne keeps her sound tight, melodic, and well produced; there are moments on the CD where you can hear how well the bandmembers play off of each other, led by Anne's slightly off-key but endearing vocals. Anne's mellow rock sensibility makes the album more funky folk-blues than Lilith Fair. *Untitled Mind* is filled with blues piano and acoustic guitar jams on tracks like "At The Rest Stop" that will get stuck in your head and leave you humming along all day. **B** —Tina Sogliuzzo

**BETTE MIDLER**  
*Bette Midler Sings the Peggy Lee Songbook*  
 (Sony BMG, \$18.99)

This is Midler's second effort with producer Barry Manilow—the first was a reprise of Rosemary Clooney—and the long-term collaborators give all the songs the same, light treatment. (Gone is Peggy's sorrow, for example, from the divine Ms. M's "I'm a Woman.") The album starts out with "Fever," a song that has been done too many times, too many ways,



by too many people to stand out, but benefits from the Broadway playfulness of "He's a Tramp" and "Big Spender." She's certainly not breaking any barriers with this album, but Midler is doing double duty by knocking off a few standards and paying tribute to a legend. The result is a jazzy camp wink that does exactly what it intends. **B** —Jenny Egan