

PRESS REVIEWS

Best Female Musicians

Dennis Halsey

Not being well versed in traditional Celtic music I was a bit pensive about writing a review of this style of music, but as I sip on my Sunday morning coffee and listen to "Cave of Gold" I find myself relaxing, enjoying Jennifer's flawless voice and finding the roots that are similar in traditional in American Folk music. For the fan of the Celtic tradition Jennifer sticks to them with a truth and obvious love of the music. As I said earlier her voice is flawless, and while she is University educated in the tradition she continues her learning journey. It is always nice to hear an artist who is not satisfied to rest on her laurels but continues to want to grow and aspire to be more.

Rambles, cultural Arts Magazine

Virginia Maclsaac

Jennifer sings in a precise classical tone. This smooth and professional presentation allows one to recognize the beauty and appreciate the importance of this folk music at another level. (Get yourself up off the pub floor.) Here's a recording that's carefully produced and full of tradition. I enjoyed every selection.

NY Sounds

Matthew Sheahan

There is much more ethnic music available today than in years past. Irish music has blossomed with a fashionable trend in Irish culture. Jennifer Licko specializes in Scottish music, and has studied Scots Gaelic at Edinburgh University. I hope she's able to capitalize on this trend in ethnic music; she certainly deserves to benefit from it just as much as the three Irish tenors or the people who keep bringing us 'Riverdance'. Still, if you listen to her album without knowing anything about Jennifer Licko or Scottish music and culture, the music stands on its own and is quite good and refreshing.

Chaos Realm

Ray Dorsey

JENNIFER LICKO – "Not That Girl" CD '03 (Private, US) –

I have to admit, this one really threw me for a loop. The previous disc I'd gotten by JENNIFER LICKO, "Cave Of Gold," was a haunting & ethereal journey into lush Celtic folk, becoming one of my most-played in that genre. So, when I popped in this new 5-songer by the North Carolina singer, I was taken way aback as I was suddenly listening to swinging, upbeat beach music! Funny thing is, after checking the disc to make sure I had the right one, I found myself sliding into a thoroughly enjoyable listen that put a huge smile on my face. On the surface, songs like "The Good Old Times," "Love To Be Loved" & "Second Time Around" are super-catchy numbers with a bounce that gets you moving while never being smarmy.

Listening closer, however, is when my admiration for Ms. LICKO really grows. Here's a vocalist who in the past has shown me the ability to stand with the best Celtic crooners in the business: names like Maireid Sullivan, Grace Griffith & Loreena McKennitt come to mind. On "Not That Girl," JENNIFER adds to her resume the chameleon-like skill to render gorgeous pop melodies to these songs with a dazzling, snappy & very sexy delivery. When I look at the mediocre talent in popular female vocals today, a field wherein so-so's like Avril Lavigne, Whitney Houston & (horror of all horrors) Celine Dion routinely take Grammys, I shake my head. JENNIFER LICKO blows 'em all away.

Jennifer Licko

Where the Music Takes Me

Michael Roberts

The engineering is clean; background harmonies and instrumentality are exactly where they need to be. And Jennifer's vocals are deft and without strain. In a phrase they can be described as "Simplistically Stylish in the feel good, fun sound of traditional Beach".

Rambles, cultural Arts Magazine

Debbie Koritsas

Here's a fascinating album: Jennifer Licko from North Carolina collaborating with Donegal-born music partner Alan Chapman on an album of Gaelic song and traditional Irish tunes. The album is named after one of Gaeldom's greatest songs, "Canan Nan Gael" (also known as "Canan Nan Gaidheal"), with its pro-Gaelic language lyric -- and it's stirring stuff!

"Gidheadh, anns ha h-Eileanan Siar
'S i fhathast ann, ciad chainnt an t-sloigh --
She's even under threat in the Isles
Though still the first language of the people."

I soon learned where this strong Celtic connection came from -- it no longer surprises me when I hear Celtic music springing up from unexpected corners of the world, and it's well-documented that the Gaels settled in the Carolinas all those years ago. I asked Jennifer where her love of the music came from, and quickly learned that she has Scots ancestry. Her real interest in Celtic music began when her aunt taught her Highland dancing at age 10. She focused on the Scottish Gaelic music of the Western Isles at university, achieving some fluency in the language. A musical partnership with Alan Chapman cemented this connection, and here we have a great album of Scottish/Irish songs and tunes.

The instrumentals are lovely -- there's Chapman's evocative pennywhistle on "The Derry Air" and also on a short set of jigs. He creates a jaunty feel on a great set of hornpipes, including "The Sweeps Hornpipe." The acoustic instrumentation is sparse and allows the clarity of the tunes to come through.

Besides performing an evocative version of the album's title track, Licko proves herself a fine singer of puit a beul (Gaelic mouth music), with such lovely songs such as "Chi mi na mor-dheanna," "Seallaidh Curaigh Eoghainn" and others. The accompaniment to these songs is restrained -- acoustic guitar, bhodran -- and she sings one set a cappella. She also covers "Claire in Heaven" by Capercaillie's Manus Lunny -- there's some elegant percussion and guitar playing here. The song works well in an acoustic format, nicely lifted by Jack Stamates' fiddle playing.

Chapman leads the vocals on two traditional (and fine) Irish songs, "The Belfast Mill" and "The Ferryman." These are delivered in country style, with some lively harmonica playing on "Belfast Mill."

The album's a little short at just under 40 minutes, but there's an extremely good (and interesting) balance of Celtic music here. And with Licko now living on Ireland's West Coast, I reckon we'll be hearing more of those Celtic roots in future!



Jennifer Licko

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