

CD REVIEWS

Artist: MANISHA SHASHANE
Title: PEACE IN PROGRESS
Label: INDEPENDENT ARTIST – www.manishamusic.com

BY ARIELLA KRISTOL FORSTEIN

A delectable collage of folk, jazz, classical and Indian musical styles, *Peace in Progress* weaves in and out of singer/songwriter **Manisha Shashane's** cross cultural, cross musical journey with themes of love and peace. Each song tells a story that provides musical imagery to pull in and engage the listener. Her smooth, clear voice is alluring and sweet, while her overall tone reveals a strong, proclamatory ideal about the world and her place in it.



Her preface reads: *I used to believe that conflicting internal commentary, misunderstandings in our homes and communities, and wars of all kinds obstructed peace, until I realized this terrain is part of our collective peace in progress...*

Opening with *Collage #1*, Manisha sings in Marathi, her parent's mother tongue from the Indian state of Maharashtra. Intricately weaving her voice in and out of elaborate melodies and rhythms on the guitar, tablas, acoustic bass and various other instruments, the song has a trance-like background fronted by expressively spoken and gently sung stories and poems of her youth.

She is a masterful musical storyteller, using the tones and textures to create stories with not just lyrics, but context. In *Imaginary Train*, Manisha's melody often takes unexpected turns, sending the song's protagonist in new directions. As the song's rhythmic and textural elements change and progress, sometimes drastically, the music unveils different parts of her emotional and physical journey. It is jazzy, well composed and exciting, leaving us to wonder, "what happens next?"

The album appeals to a large audience because its genres and sounds are diverse and intertwined throughout. For those who crave sounds of India, *Nachre Mora*, meaning "Dance Peacock," a Marathi children's song, is not arranged or fused, staying true to tradition. In *Clumsy*, a soft beginning fit for a Broadway musical slowly transforms into somewhat of an esoteric rock sound, with the instruments complimenting and coloring the voice.

Manisha's lyrics, inspired by everyday characters she encounters, her personal life and her upbringing in India, in addition to her impeccable articulation make the album easy to understand and enjoyable to interpret. Poetic and descriptive, her lyrics are personal. *The light of the waxing moon guides me to where saltwater mangoes taste of your skin... with every footprint I am getting closer to where the ocean greets the sky.*

One of Manisha's strengths, in addition to being a solid and inventive musician, is connecting and collaborating with talented musicians. As heard on the recording, Manisha's collaboration with **Jerry Leake** on tablas (**Club D'elf**, **Ali Akbar Khan**), **Blake Newman** on acoustic bass (**Jeff Robinson Trio**), guitarists **Kevin Barry** (**Mary Chapin Carpenter**) and **Prasanna** (**Joe Lovano**, **Hari Prasad Chaurasia**), plus percussionist **Ricardo Monzon** (**Boston Pops**, **Myanna**) proves to be unique and enchanting.

New to Los Angeles, Manisha is working with local musicians, has started work on her next album, and will soon likely invade Southern California with sounds so intriguing that enthusiastic musicians and fans will seek her out, wanting to hear and make music. Just wait

Artist: JOHN 'THE YANK' HARRINGTON
Title: A CELTIC CENTURY

BY GEORGE REESE

Every now and then you find a wonderful little nugget of folk music, an obscure recording of an unknown artist in some tiny shop or on some esoteric website dedicated to the preservation and promotion of folk culture. Or maybe you receive it as a gift.

Such was the case with this 1999 CD, *A Celtic Century*. On first glance it looked to be nothing more than a charming local musician (in this case local to Butte, Montana), and his shot at immortality by way of a CD recording. It is much more.

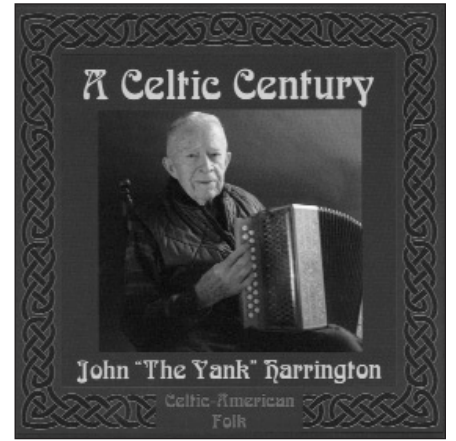
The artist, John 'The Yank' Harrington, was indeed a 'local musician' as well as a legend. He was also 96 at the time of the recording, with a head full of Celtic and American tunes from 90 years worth of playing the button accordion. 'The Yank' (nicknamed so over seven decades ago when he lived in Ireland) packs 36 crisply played tunes into the CD, which runs just under an hour. The songs average a minute and a half apiece, and each tune is preceded by an introduction by Harrington. Selections include *Dear Old Donegal*, *The River Shannon*, *Maggie in the Woods*, *Boys of Blue Hill*, *Skibbereen*, *The Sidewalks of New York*, *Turkey in the Straw*, and *Yankee Doodle*. The liner notes are a delight too, documenting The Yanks colorful life from his early childhood as a first-generation American born to Irish immigrants, to the loss of his father to miner's consumption and his mother's death from influenza in 1918, to his seven years in Ireland and his run-in with the British troops (the 'Black and Tans' – they dismissed interrogating him because he was 'a Yank'), and back to America where he finally settled in Butte (reputed to be the third most Irish county in the US).

If you're a fan of the button accordion and traditional Irish tunes, this is a hard-to-find gem that is well worth the search. The album is a wonderful archive of classic standards, and a perfect tutorial for button accordion players as well. Harrington passed away in 2002 at 99 years of age, but his music will live on for decades to come through this recording. So where did I get my copy? It was a gift...from my mother, who passed away in 2005. I found it this past October while sorting through her pictures and letters. Some gifts are very special. Thanks, Mom.

You should still be able to obtain a copy by contacting:

John 'The Yank' Productions
 108 South Montana Street, Butte, Montana 59701
 406-723-5911 Toll Free 888-923-5911

The album is also available at www.countyceltic.com/music.htm



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