

# INK on Berlin

(in full here: <http://www.rickberlin.com/reviews/index.html>)

Rick Berlin, "Me & Van Gogh." It may have taken 30-plus years for veteran Boston singer-songwriter Rick Berlin to make his masterpiece, but it was worth the wait. "Me & Van Gogh" is an intimate, idiosyncratic collection of verite snapshots and cocktail-napkin sketches that together make up a tender, grandly tormented portrait of people wounded by dreams and bruised by experience. Berlin's spare, bold brush strokes of piano and conversational cabaret croon vividly illuminate this singular work.

**Globe Top Ten CDs of 06 - Jonathan Perry**

After a career in elaborate cabaret-rock bands like Orchestra Luna and Berlin Airlift, Rick Berlin has peeled away all the glitz and stage makeup to reveal the naked beauty of "Me & Van Gogh". An absolutely brilliant collection of heartfelt tunes, containing stories of sluts, Buddhas and beerbellies, that might remind you of early Randy Newman or Tom Waits (think "Martha") but would only point you in the general direction of the special place that this kind of material deserves. It would be "Criminal" if this record doesn't get the attention it deserves.

**Peter Bochan (WBAI, New York City) - altnmusic**

A one-time member of Boston's legendary art-rock ensemble, Orchestra Luna, Rick Berlin's honed his cabaret stylings and theatrical wit into a bold solo album filled with vivid drama and aching confession. Utilizing no more than his punctured vocals and fluid piano playing, he spins twelve songs that stake out a fertile field of moods and monologues, recalling along the way such indomitable piano men as Randy Newman and Tom Waits, as well as formidable storytellers like Bruce Springsteen and Leonard Cohen. A rambunctious tour de force, Me & Van Gogh makes quite an impression.

**Entertainment News & Views - Listening with Lee Zimmerman**

From his documentary-in-progress about the people of JP, to his unfinished musical about a boy with a magic harmonica, to his pal-packed collaborative cabaret throwdowns, to his most recent masterpiece of heavily populated pop, Me and Van Gogh, the work of stalwart minor star Rick Berlin has always been a celebration of characters. But for seasoned and newbie local musicians alike, from the Dresden Dolls to Sand Machine, the character worth celebrating is Berlin himself.

**MICHAEL BRODEUR - the WEEKLY DIG**

...a style that does recall the Beats, like a car rushing downhill on no gas, sharing their compulsion to change society to allow for unbridled love, to pursue ecstasy and insight at life's raw edge.

**Abigail Norman - JP GAZETTE**

Mixing sibilant whispers of Byrne, Waits, and Brak, Berlin drops his hands on the keys in simple patterns that support and set various moods for his off-center stories. From the Kerouaced poetry of "The Ride" to the bouncing defiance of "Beer Belly" and the harsher incarcerated epistle simply entitled "A Letter," Berlin looks on bar stools, in cars, and under the pain of life to find heroes and anti-heroes (though the difference is often hard to discern).

Not only is the title track appropriately painterly but it, like the entire album, reveals more shades of color and feeling with each repeated listen.

**Matt Robinson - The Epoch Times**

...plucked-from-life stories, tough piano playing. He approaches the instrument like a good punk-rock guitarist, driving the grooves in a spare forceful way, yet darting into angular blocks of sound and laying snatches of melody

over his rhythm lines. Next to his voice – which rises and sinks like an emotional barometer of his lines, his homespun piano style is a most distinctive instrument. He holds nothing back. There's something genuine and special in the chemistry of his voice, playing, and songs.

**TED DROZDOWSKI**

**Cellars By Starlight - The Boston Phoenix**

Rick has a sense of conviction that can turn lyrics into something that reaches into your heart and pulls the deepest string. He truly delivers his sense of emotions into his music. It's a perfect balance of high art and base rock. And somehow, it's all because of who Rick is. With his AIDS activism and political activism, his interest in great writers . . . he's a bit of a Renaissance man.

**David Minehan, producer**

Berlin is an incredibly honest and touching songwriter and performer with a quirky charm, full of love for humans in our absurd glory, a gorgeous compassion for the world in all its extremes, both beautiful and horrible.

**Sady Sullivan**

**The Weekly Dig**

Berlin has come to be known as something of a dilettante. He explores and brings together elements of cabaret, burlesque, rock, and pop. He's unconventional as a piano player, and cares not a whit for genre limitations. He takes chances and stretches musical boundaries. And we are so lucky.

**Lexi Kahn**

**Altar Native**

...the melodies could have passed muster in the Brill Building; the songs are about something, narratives shaded with compassion and wit and experience.

**Robin Vaughan**

**The Boston Herald**

We often wonder how the Dorian Gray-like Rick Berlin has time to write songs. Every week, the lead singer of the Shelley Winters Project taps out a fresh, booze-soaked tale starring his band's namesake, and then e-mails the story to dozens of eager readers (including Go!). In these tales, he places poor Shelley in the most precarious, embarrassing situations -- from a drunken, late-night crossing of the Zakim-Bunker Bridge, to the startling confession "Luke, I am your muthuh."

**Christopher Muther**

**GO! The Boston Globe**

Berlin is a throwback – to the androgynous glam of Bowie and the New York Dolls, the glammy punk of Talking Heads and Blondie, and the proto-new wave of Roxy Music. Berlin is the traveling troubadour of the Boston scene, bringing the stories of one neighborhood to another in his songs: the waitresses he works with at Doyles, the pretty girls at the end of the bar at Brendan Behan, the Cambridge club we won't name where things got really out of hand one night. Berlin is Boston.

**Jon Garelick**

**The Boston Phoenix**

Talk all you want about Steven Tyler, Aimee Mann, Peter Wolf or a thousand others. To these ears, the best and brightest songwriter Boston ever produced was the forever-

underrated Rick Berlin.

**FACE Magazine**

'Jacques' is the best live CD I have ever heard. Some tracks make you laugh, some think, some almost make you want to cry, and some just make you want to hang your mouth open and say 'huh?' After one listen, you will be addicted to RICK BERLIN's poetic lyrics and boisterously entertaining vocals.

**Peter Oberth**

**flickmusic.com**

Berlin's songs evoke characters as colorful as the crowds that gather to hear them, and he willingly shares the highs and lows of his life with a level of depth rarely captured through song.

**Christopher Muther**

**BAY WINDOWS (Rants and Raves)**

For the uninitiated, be prepared; the songs are startlingly confessional, filled with the kind of soul-bearing + rapid-fire beauty that has always been Berlin's trademark.

**Kevin O'Hare**

**THE SPRINGFIELD UNION-NEWS**

"Er heißt nicht nur Berlin, er ist wie Berlin: Wild, ungezügelt, hart, ein Chansonnier, der rauhe Wärme ausstrahlt, immer unfertig, immer auf der Suche, voller Gegensätze. Es ist unmöglich, ihn zu hören, ohne wirklich zuzuhören."

("His name is not only Berlin, he is like Berlin: Wild, harsh, unleashed, a singer-songwriter of raw energy, always searching, never finished, full of contradictions. It is impossible to hear him without truly listening.")

**Robert von Rimscha, Washington Bureau Chief**

**"DER TAGESSPIEGEL" (Berlin/Germany)**

Like Elton John possessed by the spirit of Jonathan Richman, Berlin's gift is in the way he combines emotional directness and sensitivity with playfulness and humor.

**Jajjguy Maurice**

**THE NOISE**

His approach is melodic, to the point, and perfectly unsentimental. As a performer Rick crawls inside his subjects and pushes them out with humor and detail like awkward children standing at the front of the class with their pants down.

**Kevin Connolly**

**ARLINGTON ARTS NEWS**