

# INK on Berlin - Old Stag

"...brilliant lyricism (see: "Happy Lesbians in the Snow" and "John Lennon's Nose"), tender and varied instrumentation, and Berlin's tremulous vocal like a flickering bulb at the dark end of a creepy hallway. It may be his best recording yet – which is saying a lot. " **(Michael Brodeur/Boston Phoenix)**

"What do you call a record with songs like 'John Lennon's Nose,' 'Happy Lesbians in the Snow,' and one about a prostitute roommate who doesn't eat? Especially when it's just voice, keys, some occasional strings, and recorded in a living room? I call it a small masterpiece. Berlin's made all kinds of music here for decades, and never fails to surprise, but rarely does anyone's material match its delivery with such finesse. It's impossible not to feel his experience in your gut, as his voice floats from whimsy to heartbreak, from ecstasy to absurdity, from wisdom to mystification, all set to words and music that unspool countless reels of a life lived fully, gladly (I'm pretty sure), and recklessly. In a perfect world, he'd be writing Broadway scores, but of course he's too smart and speaks a hundred times the truth of that swill." **(Joe Coughlin/The Noise)**

"...with his wonderfully craggy voice - think Nick Cave meets John Cale. His lyrics are, fittingly, a heady brew of lament and cynicism, and his sound is a mostly successful, and often bizarre mash of baroque pop and folk." **(Claire/The Boston Tea Party)**

"Old Stag (Hi-N-Dri), is an intimate affair. Even the string

section ('recorded in a B.U. classroom) on 'Happy Lesbians in the Snow' feels homegrown and folksy. Berlin, who has been a recording artist for more than 30 years, retains his unique musical perspective, and continues to express himself for all who are willing to listen." **(Gregg Shapiro/Bay Area Reporter)**

"dazzling musical curiosities... lyrical magnum opus" **(Tristram Lozaw/Boston Globe)**

"...his most completely realized and thoroughly beautiful album, Boston's legendary Rick Berlin has gathered another team of talented youngsters (most notably the string section of Joseph Simcox, Katie Franich, Christina Hornby and Meredith Cooper and Sand Machine singer Jay Dave Jeremy) in his Jamaica Plains apartment and an empty Boston University classroom and emerged with a baker's dozen of musical treats. While the cracking heart-rending vocals and poetic pathos remain Berlin's trademarks, the strings (arranged by Brendan Cooney) give the ensemble of lyrical observations a story without words." **(Matt Robinson/Northeast Performer)**

"**A-** The former Orchestra Luna frontman shows an uncanny ability for turning anguished poetry and sparse piano strokes into compelling music. Recorded in his Jamaica Plain living room and named for the Egleston Square bar, Berlin produces a theatrical, gritty and emotional opera for the marginalized. With ambient street noise and the hushed sighs of a string quartet, his brand of art-rock cabaret recalls Lou Reed channeling Kurt Weill - and it's just as spooky. Download: Your Light Is On." **(Nate Dow/Boston Herald)**

"Rather than simply frame his arrangements with standard rock backing, he juxtaposes a string quartet against piano phrases, with his vocals adding a jarring, combative or sometimes just wry undertone. You could call Old Stag alternative rock with a folkie tinge, or even orchestrated Americana, but it's certainly

both stylistically different and very refreshing...provocative lyricist and edgy vocalist." **(Ron Wynn/Nashville City Paper)**

"a childlike faith in the way Berlin's songwriting takes people just as they are. Not drawn to introspection - 'I'm tired of myself,' he laughs - Berlin's songs tend to be humble, honest slices of sidewalk reportage, little stories about people he knows or things he overheard. Berlin cites a Nick Cave quote as the model for his style: 'He says there's always a song walking down the street, and if you don't catch it, someone else will.'...For him, people's stories are just like songs. There's always one walking down the street, waiting to be caught." **(Brian Jewell/Bay Windows)**

"From the delicate strings and even more delicate feelings put across on this latest album from one of the area's most beloved legends, 'Old Stag' simply reeks with beauty...It's simple. It's complex. It's low-tech. It's high art. It's beautiful." **(Matthew Robinson/Music Dish)**

# **INK on Berlin - Me & Van Gogh**

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.

### **Jonathan Perry/Globe Top Ten CDs of 06**

...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**

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