

Chantey Singer

Alison Lee Freeman



reviewed by holiday

Alison Lee Freeman is a rather accomplished chantey singer, as she proves in her new full length album, Chantey Singer. For those of you who don't know, a chantey is "a song sung by sailors to the rhythm of their movements while working" (according <http://www.yourdictionary.com>). The music is defined by unique vocal melodies, usually witty story telling, and no instruments. Freeman keeps to this tradition and I feel that this record is sort of an attempt by her to sort of educate about just what traditional chantey is and to show that it's still relevant today. Her voice, accompanied by a variety of others, and a shaker on only two tracks, carries you through an entire record of songs varying from the traditional "Derelict" to her own modern humor in "Alison's Saab Story", which happens to be the records single.

When I first popped in the record I was rather excited. It's not every day you get to hear this brand of music done somewhat seriously. And certainly for the first four or five songs I was not disappointed. However, with a twelve song record the novelty kind of wore off and although I enjoyed the experience overall, I couldn't picture myself listening to this again. Chantey seems like it would be fun to listen to in a coastal pub on the coast of Maine but here in suburban California it sort of lacks its luster.

The record is certainly fun to listen to and afterwards I felt the urge to get up in my cubicle at work and dance and sing, which gives tribute to the tradition of chantey and for that I applaud Freeman, but still, 12 songs seems a bit much for a vocals only record. Fans of traditional music should own this record.

Genre: Chantey

Released: 2003

Drink & The Devil

Alison Lee Freeman as HEAVEN STREET



reviewed by rockandrollgirl

I felt transported to the 60's, enveloped by the classic folk songs of Heaven Street. Their musical styling brought me back and had me picturing old 1960's television shows with seemingly mind boggling musical talents. But Heaven Street didn't construct an album based upon the novelties of the past, instead they've created something new and refreshing.

Guitars, drums and bass with a female vocalist complete this musical ensemble. The vocals have a bit of a Celtic feel to them, reminding me of The Cranberries. Drink & the Devil has good musical styling with lyrics that are heartfelt and thought provoking. I could see myself listening to the album during a drive on a rainy day, while I grew melancholy and thoughtful about life. My favorite tracks are "What Were You Thinking" and "Love and Misery".

I'm not sure if it was the mixing, but I found that the vocals were too low throughout the album and lacked that powerful, projected feel that is so important in catching the listener. I enjoyed the album in spite of this, but with more power added to the vocals (through mixing, etc...) Heaven Street would have sounded a lot more dynamic.

By listening to the lyrics I could see that the songs were very emotional and that these emotions could have been brought into the forefront even more if the vocals carried more emotional peaks. Perhaps in an attempt to have the vocals sound perfect, there was a suppression of some of the emotion that could have been expressed. The listener almost always appreciates peaks of emotion in vocals and they are really important to a great song, whether or not the singer goes off-key once or twice during these peaks...this is easily forgivable.

I did find this to be a great record from a band that I am very hopeful about. I really enjoyed the lyrics and musical qualities of the album. The style is wonderful. Heaven Street is definitely a band filled with ideas and potential, I am excited to hear more from them in the future. Good work on the album.

Genre: Folk Rock

Released: 2002

A review of *Chantey Singer* on CDBaby.com by Ron Shewbridge

Incredible mix of traditional and modern lyrics. The beautiful harmonies will stir your soul. If you only buy one album of sea chanties buy this one.

A review of *Drink and the Devil* by Joshua Cantor

Drink and the Devil is, on the face of it, a heterogeneous affair. It boasts a variety of styles from the hook-laden jangle-pop of "Arrow in the Blue" (surely a single?) to the slow rootsy blues of "Love and Misery". "Captured" recalls "Harvest Moon" era Neil Young, while "Now You're Gone" combines an achingly lovely slide guitar with an autumnal melody that makes it sound like Ry Cooder jamming with Joan Armatrading. At other times a warm and mellow folkiness pervades the proceedings. Yet this record is bound together by two things: Alison Freeman's rich and resonant voice and the bittersweet confessional tone of her songs. Except for a few solid covers (including a gorgeous take on Sting's Fields of Gold, a Dungeons and Dragons Aerosmith ditty and a rousing sea shanty), the bulk of *Drink and the Devil* is a series of sometimes moving, sometimes witty, and always intelligent examinations of interpersonal relationships. She tells her stories of heartbreak, regret and loss (often liberally doused with alcohol) with remarkable insight and sensitivity. Her lush and pure contralto belies her formal musical training and complements her compositions perfectly. She combines this beautiful instrument with diction that is extraordinarily precise, an unusual approach for music of this kind. But it works for Ms. Freeman because it instills the material with gravity and poetry. And in the case of the hilarious and self-mocking "Pick Up Song" she illustrates that it can also be used for comedic effect. The album is recorded with a wonderful clarity that showcases Austin Nevins's amazingly versatile and heartfelt guitar work and Dimitri Fane and Ken Schopf's subtle yet propulsive rhythm section. You could do far worse than to invest in this record, a compelling statement from a very talented group of artists.

Music to Drown Your Sorrows and Raise Your Spirits – A review of *Drink and the Devil* by Kate Epstein

Have a seat at the bar next to Alison Freeman and she'll tell you stories on Heaven Street's first offering, "Drink and the Devil."

The alcohol runs freely but Ms. Freeman's warm contralto articulates precisely her eleven song-tales of interpersonal relationships, always intelligent, often troubled, sometimes hilarious. Originals range from ambivalent ("Captured") to rueful ("Now You're Gone") to hilariously candid ("The Pick-Up Song") to cautiously optimistic ("The Surrender") to sweet ("Arrow in the Blue"). Many of these stories seem to involve bars. That's perhaps because, as she interrupts herself in "The Pick-Up Song," she is ~~a drunk~~—a musician. Highly detailed lyrics and Ms. Freeman's grave delivery seamlessly integrate the covers into the mix; Sting's "Fields of Gold" gains new clarity and tenderness from HeavenST's distinct sound.

Austin Nevins's heartfelt guitar and subtle rhythm provided by Dimitri Fane's bass guitar and Ken Schopf's percussion lead your storyteller through a wide variety of styles, from pop to blues to folk, always united by open-eyed realism and resonant singing.

A sea shanty finale creates an ironic cap to the proceedings, featuring the same precise lyrical detail boasted by the first eleven tracks. You'll order another round and play it again.