



Island Mele

John Berger



REVIEW

Random Notes

Howard Shapiro

(Kumanu Music KM 1010)

Howard Shapiro is a veteran composer who often writes in support of political causes or sane environmental policies. He emphasizes that side of his work here, bringing the traditions of early '60s protest singers into the new century in an articulate style. Political messages sometimes take precedence over pop-friendly hooks and standard meter, but the asymmetric rhyme patterns often underscore his passion in denouncing religious hatred or calling for better treatment of the world's ocean life.

A small band and several backing vocalists expand the melodies beyond the core sound of a singer and his acoustic guitar. For instance, a flute adds a light counterpoint to "Ashes Upon the Ground," one of several songs that decry the human cost of war (the liner notes show that he wrote it in 1988 and therefore it is not specifically an indictment of America's current war in Iraq).

Shapiro steps forward as a traditional American patriot with "Only Thing Worth Livin' For," and mourns the nation's apparent loss of innocence with "Sand Through Our Hands" as he recalls growing up in the '50s.

It isn't all political. Shapiro celebrates the beauty of Mauna Kea with "Silent in the Night" and honors the memory of his father with "Gentle Warrior."

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▶ **Gentle Warrior**
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