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ISSUE 237



June 5 - 11, 2008



FREE EVERY THURSDAY

Another di Mentshn

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Defy anyone to listen to Millie and the Mentshn's new CD and try to write an objective review. The amazing Bellingham klezmer band could stir passions in a stone statue, so I won't pretend to be anything other than a fan, in the truest sense of that word.

What's not to like?

There doesn't seem to be any limits to what this talented aggregation can do. In *Another di Mentshn*, they boldly go...well, you know. Lead singer and arranger Millie Johnson explained the origins of the title.

"While *Mentshn It* (the previous CD) contains many songs from the ghettos and concentration camps, this CD moves into another dimension, adding songs from folks who survived," she said. "That's why, this time, I book-ended with songs associated with Tin Pan Alley artists."

From the starting and ending points in Tin Pan Alley, the music darts around the globe from Turkey to Spain to the Ukraine. It's actually a thoroughly painless lesson in history and geography, thanks to Johnson's meticulous liner notes.

There are some musical lessons to be learned, as well. Familiar phrases jump out here and there, bringing delightful surprises when you learn their origins.

It's always a pleasure to hear musicians so accomplished that they make the difficult seem effortless.

Ken Bronstein on oboe, Phil Heaven on violin, Lou Lippman on piano, and Warren Palken on drums and percussion join Johnson at this rare level of achievement.

Johnson's arranging is so straightforward that you have to listen actively in order to appreciate the subtle complexities. I've long since run out of adjectives to describe

her extraordinary voice.

The band's productions are what used to be called "concept albums."

Like a well-written dramatic presentation, they tell a compelling story. They will make you laugh and cry and dance and sing along, all within the confines of a single CD.

All of this musical magnificence would be wasted, of course, if the recording and mixing weren't up to snuff.

Paul Turpin of Bayside Re-



Millie and the Mentshn have released a new CD that defies time and space, appropriately entitled *Another di Mentshn*.

Photo by Christopher Key

recording made sure every delicious note can be heard and band member Phil Heaven of Soundings of the Planet was the obvious choice to do the artful mix.

As mentioned (no pun intended) in a previous article, the band has drawn international attention by being invited to the first annual Klezfiesta in Buenos Aires, Brazil later this year.

To help finance their trip, the band will be hosting a CD release party at 3 p.m. on June 22 at the Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship. The event is free, but donations will be gratefully accepted.

The band will be playing music from all three of their CDs, all of which will also be on sale.

"As a special enticement, local playwright Marla Bronstein has written some short dramatic vignettes to accompany music from our first CD, *Homeland to Heartland*," Johnson said. "She's using excerpts from the journals of my ancestors."

Don't wait for that event to become a Millie and the Mentshn true believer.

The new CD is available only at www.MillieAndTheMentshn.com until after the release party.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I really need to go listen to *Another di Mentshn* again. ■WI