



### Sylvia Herold “**Lovely Nancy**” Tuxedo Records

Herold has been a fixture on California’s traditional folk/bluegrass/jazz swing scene for the past quarter of a century and, “**Lovely Nancy**,” her third solo outing, is significantly given over to a musical exploration of the variety, Folk : Traditional Arranged. The performers are credited in the liner booklet as Sylvia Herold & Euphoria – the latter being a trio composed of Paul Kotapish [mandolin] and Brian Rice [percussion] members of another of Herold’s bands, Wake The Dead, and Charlie Hancock [accordion, piano].

In the liner notes Herold hints that the opening song “Fennario” is “*probably Scottish in origin*,” and as I’ve stated in Folkwax before it’s directly related to “The Bonnie Lass O’Fyvie.” Wake The Dead is a Grateful Dead tribute band that, in terms of a sound, performs with a Celtic edge. As for another link in a chain of seemingly endless musical connections, I guess it’s hardly surprising if I relate that during the early seventies Garcia and the Dead regularly performed “Peggy-O,” a variation of “Fennario.” A soldier has his wicked way with a willing young maid in “The Light Dragoon,” while Paul Mulligan, a present day Kinvara based musician, penned the melody to the Francis A. Fahy poem “Tide Full In.” Born in Kinvara, Ireland, Fahy [1854 – 1935] lived for much of his life in England, but continues to be held in great esteem in the place of his birth. Fahy’s poem begins with a fond recollection of warm, hazy summer days and goes on to relate how, years ago, the narrator’s true love left on a ship to seek his fortune [and never returned]. Herold’s choice of traditionally sourced fare continues with “The Cruel Mother,” and Kotapish on mandolin and Hancock on piano do sterling work in propelling the melody. The lyric relates how a mother knowingly takes the life of her young child, although, later, the ghost of the child returns to remind her of her callous action. The lyric to the up-tempo “Kitty And I” was penned by Joe Carter, the son of Sarah and A.P. Carter, and supported by his up-tempo melody, Carter Jr.’s words tell of a young couple who love to dance.

Marla Fibish, Herold’s one time performing partner, set a French/Canadian melody to the Robert Service poem “The Bohemian Dreams.” Hancock’s accordion adds further authenticity to this recollection of early twentieth century Paris café society. Acknowledged as a Canadian poet, but born in England of Scottish bloodstock, the first verse opens with “*Because my overcoat’s in pawn I choose to take my glass, Within a little bistro on the rue du Montparnasse.*” In subsequent verses, the narrator - a now down-on-his-luck, one time international traveller – allows his mind to fill with recollections of countries he has visited including Monte Carlo, Hungary, Japan, Spain, Palestine and more. At the outset of “The Turkish Revery” a young sailor addresses the ship’s captain with an offer to sink a nearby ship that carries fifty sailors – we’re really not told why he would want to do this. Having carried out the dreadful deed, the sailor is in turn drowned by the captain, while “Bonny Tavern Green,” which immediately follows, is, in comparison, a tender love song. Geographically speaking Udney is located in Aberdeenshire, north of the city of Aberdeen, while “The Laird Of Udney” is another bawdy tale of male/female coupling in the vein of “The Light Dragoon.” “Dublin City” opens with a late night meeting between a man and “*a fair pretty maiden.*” Having engaged her in conversation, the maid encapsulates her thoughts concerning the opposite sex and their wives with “*Young men they are so deceiving, Sad experience teaches me,*” and of the lover who sailed away a year ago she adds “*I’m no more to him nor he to me, Than the cool wind passin’ o’er my hand.*” Although the lyric doesn’t explore the possibility, the thought did strike me that the man was the maiden’s lover returned [obviously unrecognised by her]? As you will have detected by now, there’s a seafaring flavour to a number of the songs on “**Lovely Nancy**,” and in the closing cut “Here’s Adieu, My Lovely Nancy,” “*a poor, jolly heart of oak*” [ie. a seaman] bids farewell to his true love before setting sail on another adventure.

Herold possesses a crystal clear singing voice, and her choice of material on “**Lovely Nancy**” is an engaging mix of the familiar and unfamiliar, while, throughout, the instrumental support by Euphoria is nothing less than warm and complimentary.

Folkwax Score 7 out of 10

**Arthur Wood.**

Kerrville Kronikles 12/05.