



## Eliza Carthy "**Anglicana**" Topic Records

I guess someone had to do *it* eventually, and, that being the case, it might as well be the crown princess of British folk music. The *it* to which I refer is, of course, the album title "**Anglicana**." In this age of Alt. country, house, world and countless other *nom de plumes* – *yawn* - someone would have done it sooner or later. In fact "**Anglicana**" crowns what has been an exceedingly productive year for Carthy, and follows hot on the heels of her contributions to the Blue Murder [\*] debut recording "**No One Stands Alone**," and the latest Waterson:Carthy collection, "**A Dark Light**."

The rear liner on the CD case carries the legend "*Made In Scotland From Girders*," which is probably going to mean *nada* to those listeners/readers living outside the British Isles, unless the soft drink product known as Irn-Bru [ <http://www.irn-bru.co.uk/irnbru.asp> ] has passed their lips during a visit to the UK. The drink is similar in taste to ginger beer and is brewed at a location somewhere North of Hadrian's Wall. It has been advertised for more years that I'd care to remember using the by-line, "*made from girders*." The manufacturer, Barrs, also refer to their product as "*Scotland's other national drink*." So there you have it.....what do they mean?

Of the ten tracks on this collection, nine hail from traditional sources [arranged by Carthy and others, of course], while the instrumental "DR MCBE" was penned by Eliza for her father Martin's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. It also celebrates the honorary degree that Martin received, in July this year, from the University of Sheffield. Martin and Eliza, respectively, trade guitar and fiddle licks on the latter cut. "Worcester City" opens the album and is a song of love and betrayal, wherein a jealous *servant man* poisons the *fair young damsel* he loves, after she is invited to a ball by her [and presumably, his] master. By way of respite from the doom and gloom, a segue of "No Man's Jig," "Hanovarian Dance" and "Three Jolly Sheepskins" form an instrumental *knees up and intermission* halfway through the disc.

Britain has been a seafaring nation for countless generations and in "**Anglicana**," our nautical history is thoroughly explored. "In London So Fair" features Carthy on piano [the first instrument she learned to play] and vocal, while the collection also includes "Just As The Tide Was Flowing" and "Bold Privateer." Although we won't go into all the racier details, suffice to say that a sailor recently returned from the sea chances to meet a pretty young maiden one morning in "Just As The Tide Was Flowing." Meanwhile, the seven-minute long "Bold Privateer" is a sad song of parting, as a sailor says "*farewell*" to his true love before sailing off to fight the French and Spanish.

A young, imprisoned wastrel – "*I spent all my money on girls and strong beer*" – unexpectedly gains his freedom through the good offices of a wealthy uncle in "Limbo." Having promised his uncle that he will mend his ways, on the night following his release, he goes to visit *the girls* - Peggy and Jeanie. You can probably guess the outcome, based on the foregoing. Vocally speaking, Eliza is supported on "Little Gypsy Girl" by her mother, Norma Waterson, and cousin Maria Gilhooley. It's the tale of a young, gypsy fortune-teller who journeys to London, where she meets and marries a handsome young squire. Closing out the set, perfectly, is a slow paced, but brassy, good-time version of "Willow Tree." This totally uplifting ending, forms a perfect antidote to the songs featured in *doom and gloom, part 2*.

Back once more with Topic Records, this album is a stunning return to form for young Carthy. Where, after all, would British traditional folk be without a fair measure of *doom and gloom* ?

**Note.**

[\*] British folk supergroup based around members of the Waterson and Carthy families, plus Jim Boyes, Barry Coope and Lester Simpson.

Folkwax Rating 7 out of 10

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