



## Mickey Newbury "**Harlequin Melodies**" Raven Records

This Australian release [panic ye not, as it is readily available planet wide], is subtitled "**The Complete RCA Recordings....Plus.**" Newbury only recorded one *full* album for RCA, "**Harlequin Melodies,**" an eleven-track disc issued in 1968 that marked his debut as a solo recording artist. RCA released "**Songs His Own**" in 1972, and that disc featured the previously unreleased Newbury cuts "Sunshine," "Got Down On Saturday" and "The Queen." That trio of cuts is included here, along with "Organised Noise" the B-side of an RCA single [\*]. For the record, RCA also issued a Newbury collection titled "**Funny, Familiar, Forgotten Feelings**" using a selection of the foregoing tracks, and the liner notes from all his RCA *discs* are reproduced here, along with Kris Kristofferson's thoughts taken from the liner of Newbury's 1969 Mercury album "**Looks Like Rain.**" As for the "**...Plus**" segment of this collection, that amounts to seven songs drawn from MCA's "**Sweet Memories,**" a 1985 *best of* release that featured previously released recordings, including the superlative segue "An American Trilogy."

Born and bred in Houston, Texas, Newbury moved to Nashville in the early sixties and a taste of fame came his way when Don Gibson took "Funny, Familiar, Forgotten Feelings" to # 8 on the Country singles charts in early 1967, while to give it its full title, a psychedelic flavoured reading of Mickey's "Just Dropped In (To See What Condition My Condition Was In)," scored a Pop # 5 single for The First Edition in the spring of the following year. The Covers Discography on Newbury's web site [<http://www.mickeynewbury.com/discography.htm>] currently lists that that foregoing pair of songs, respectively to date, have been cut by 37 and 15 different recording artists. Six of the cuts on the original "**Harlequin Melodies**" featured string arrangements by Tupper Saussy, and those arrangements are reminiscent of Tupper's subsequent quasi-classical recordings as Neon Philharmonic with the late Don Gant. On a fashion note, the main liner photograph features Newbury wearing a kaftan style jacket, and a sitar was used on "Are My Thoughts With You" and "Just Dropped In" - the latter closes with a *blue-meanies* styled "**Yellow Submarine**" vocal. This recording, made one year on from the *summer of love*, truly attests that Newbury was never just *an average* Nashville country songwriter, rather, even at this early stage in his career, his was a talent without boundaries. "Mister, Can't You See" and "Weeping Annaleah" were co-written with close friend and fellow Texan Townes Van Zandt. Pre-Nashville, back in Houston, Messrs. Newbury, Van Zandt and Guy Clark had been something of a folk/country/blues songwriting triumvirate. All three Texans eventually spent time, living and working, in Nashville.

During his lifetime – he passed away in September 2002, aged 62 – Newbury recorded for RCA, Mercury [twice], Elektra, Hickory, Airborne, Winter Harvest and Mountain Retreat. The liner of the "**Sweet Memories**" vinyl release indicate that the tracks date from 1973/75, a period when Newbury was contracted to Elektra [#]. Something of a rarity in the recording industry, Newbury's career was littered with classic album releases. When the ten album / eight CD "**Mickey Newbury Collection**" box set saw the light of day a few years back, "**Harlequin Melodies**" was not present. Whatever the reasons for its omissions, it's wonderful to have it back in the public domain once more. As for that earlier reference to a sitar, believe me the contents of this disc will never date.

### Note.

[\*] – Newbury's 1973 Elektra album "**I Came To Hear The Music**" included a reinterpretation of "Organised Noise."

[#] - Having physically checked the seven CD *bonus* cuts against the original vinyl recordings that truly appears to be the case, although the recordings I checked actually span the period 1971/75. Even more curious is the fact that "She Even Woke Me Up To Say Goodbye," originally appeared on his 1969 Mercury album "**Looks Like Rain**," although Elektra later released it as part of a double disc set in 1973 along with "**Live At Montezuma Hall**." To the best of my knowledge, Newbury never officially made a recording for the MCA label.

Folkwax Rating 8 out of 10

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