



Beautifully produced by Kevin Salem (Mercury Rev, Bad Brains, Chocolate Genius) and Knox Chandler (David Gahan, Siouxsie & the Banshees), **Bethany Yarrow's debut cd, ROCK ISLAND**, mixes the gloss of pop production with banjos, dulcimers, harmonicas, slide guitars, gospel choirs, and the sampled ghosts of some of the great blues singers in America. In unexpected ways, the CD borrows from the deep river of American song and creates a gorgeous and totally contemporary sonic landscape with Bethany's haunting voice at the forefront.

"Folk music may be in my blood, but I spent a lot of time running away from it," says Bethany. "By the time I was 14, I had green hair, eleven piercings, was listening to hardcore, and spent my weekends at Danceteria and my Sundays down at CBGBs.... Singing these old tunes was the *last* thing I thought I'd end up doing."

But folk music is in her blood indeed, (her father is Peter of the legendary folk trio Peter, Paul & Mary) and sometimes there is no escaping it. So last year Bethany decided to return to her roots and the music she grew up with by recording a CD of traditional American songs. "I guess you can run, but you can't hide..." she says. "So, I've been re-recording traditional slave lullabies, prison songs, and murder ballads, turning them into a kind of grooving electronic pop that I call 'deep folk' music, as in 'deep house' or 'deep soul'. These may be old songs, but this CD doesn't really sound at all like folk music, and that was kind of the point."

Bethany's voice has been called, "mesmerizing", "intense", "powerful", "eerie".... "A cross between PJ Harvey and Annie Lenox... Dido and Grace Slick..." It's a seemingly strange combination of sounds that somehow all comes together, but in re-inventing these deeply American songs, Bethany has not only taken them into the future, she has made them deeply her own.

"Obviously I've grown up with a lot of these songs, but most people my age have never even heard them," says Bethany. "They've basically been brought up on rock, hip-hop and electronica -- so the whole challenge has been to find a way to take them out of the dusty bin of history and give them another life as songs relevant to the 21st century. If I can even begin to connect the dots between folk and rap, talking blues and hip-hop, murder ballads and trance, train rhythms and the pulse of a dance floor, then this whole project will have been worth it."



“...The outstanding CD, *Rock Island*, is a collection of traditional folk songs brought back to glorious, pulsing, dramatic life by an artist whose delicate voice breathes from the depths of a gothic spirit. This CD is magic. I was listening to musical history as it was happening. Nothing in the traditional folk world could have prepared its fans for the likes of Yarrow, yet she’s one of the best things that ever happened to the genre. Lost in these swirling remakes, I could hear the intent and purpose of the original songs being pulled into the present on a dark wave. You can’t help but listen. For all its delicate nature, Yarrow’s voice is powerful. Her amplified deep breathing on the opening track made my skin tingle in response. In “Pretty Polly,” a ballad of betrayal and murder, the haunted vocal sounds like the ghost of the dead woman is singing. And the music will lure fans of any genre. She opens some tracks with Celtic crooning that dissolves into hip-hop – with a cello. She offers electronica/new age/pop with a grinding groove that would make bodies on a dance floor melt together. Old spirituals rise from the ground. The vibe settles in deep. There’s pulsing, dangerous life in this music. I can’t imagine what path Yarrow will take on her next CD, but I’ll wrap myself in a long velvet cape and follow her anywhere.” – *Jennifer Layton, indie-music.com*

“Bethany Yarrow is a musical medium. Serving as an intermediary between modern audiences and the ghosts of American folk and blues singers, Yarrow is sharing some powerful messages in her trip-hop songs. She calls the re-recording of traditional slave lullabies, prison songs and murder ballads “deep folk music,” but these refreshing arrangements cover the gamut of rock, pop, trance, funk and gospel. Many critics have compared her voice to PJ Harvey and Dido. In truth, her pipes sound like a unique mixture of Odetta and Snakefarm. Her debut CD is a triumphant proclamation; every bluesy track demands attention and leaves the listener feeling slightly haunted.” – *Siren Song Magazine*

“I LOVE the new CD! Stunning is the best word I can come up with.... a magnificent recording!”  
– *Ron Olesko, WFDU, Bergenfield, NJ*

“The overall effect is mesmerising, drawing you in to an eerie world where things glimpsed out of the corner of the eye move noiselessly in the shadows...” – *Americana UK*

“For this refreshingly unique and powerful CD, Bethany Yarrow has pulled from the archives of traditional folk a handful of haunting stories of tragedies and trains... You can settle in for a most fascinating, interesting and spell-binding ride! Throughout the 12-track collection, ethereal backgrounds punctuated by hypnotic beats and electronic effects lay a foundation for Bethany's sweet but stirring vocals. *Rock Island* provides a provocatively dark and deep listening experience that's addicting!” – *R.A.Lindquist, Singer Magazine*

“...It's quite an impressive record and the renditions of several of the classics (*Rock Island* and *Another Man* in particular) are incredible. We need more records like this!” – *Barry Weber, WRST-FM, Oshkosh, WI*



“This new album combines trip-hop rhythms with traditional songs .... The players are superb, and Bethany Yarrow's singing is spellbinding!” -- *Paul Stalmer, KDHX, St. Louis*

“Bethany Yarrow's new recording... preserves the heart and soul of traditional music even as it blows off the dust and cobwebs. She's created her own unique fusion of yesterday and tomorrow.”  
-- *Mary Katherine Aldin*

“I found the CD fascinating.... Lots of people record these old songs.... but Bethany has used a little wizardry here and there to transform them. I found myself listening to them as though for the first time! It might not have worked so well except that, with her voice, she could get away with just about anything!” – *Arthur Elliott, Radio 99.7FM, Brisbane, Australia*

“The way that Bethany is arranging these traditional folk tunes is wonderful. Really! She manages to retain the song's integrity and still make it sound contemporary, cool and with a groove that keeps on going. Great job!” – *Gene Shay, WXPN, Philadelphia, PA*

“I was lucky enough to snag an advance copy... and glad I did... Take traditional folk songs and put them behind club/house/trip-hop beats and you have something unique... and, in this case, well worth playing. I can't wait to hear the finished copy. I've played two cuts, *Rock Island Line* and *Black is the Colour* and both times got called to find out who was singing....” – *Carolyn Van de Wiele, WFHB, Bloomington, IN*

“A big talent... a combination of Sade and Joni with the pretty pop of Sarah McLachlan and the young edge of Alanis. The music she performs, however, is uniquely Bethany, mixing influences from around the world with a contemporary folk-pop sound.” – *Telluride Weekly Planet*