

Mp3 Gor Mkhitarian - Yeraz



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An impassioned and beautiful Armenian acoustic album featuring a banjo, two guitars, dumbeg, and vox. Authentic and accessible New Armenian Folk Music. "Brilliant record...one of the best I've ever heard."- CD Baby President. 11 MP3 Songs WORLD: World Fusion, FOLK: Modern Folk Details: *** 2002 Just Plain Folks Nomination- Best Ethnic/World Music Album ("Yeraz") *** 2002 Just Plain Folks Nomination- Best Ethnic/World Music Song ("Yeraz") *** 2002 Armenian Music Awards WINNER- Best Album Cover *** 2002 Armenian Music Awards Nomination- Best Alternative Armenian Folk Album ("Yeraz") *** 2002 Armenian Music Awards Nomination- Best Newcomer (Gor Mkhitarian) WHAT THE CRITICS ARE SAYING ABOUT "YERAZ"! "A deep soulful approach to Armenian folk music. Both mournful and inspiring, Gor Mkhitarian delivers with an abundance of enjoyable listening." - Martin Curti, New World Buzz ABOUT GOR MKHITARIAN- YERAZ Gor Mkhitarian's long-awaited debut solo album is finally here. Released on the upstart world/classical music label Pomegranate Music, Mkhitarian's album entitled, "Yeraz", has been hailed as one of the most anticipated independent world music releases of the year by several industry insiders. Produced by Raffi Meneshian and recorded in Armenia by Mika Margarian, "Yeraz" is a contemporary Armenian folk masterpiece consisting of 11 songs featuring two acoustic guitars, percussion, and a banjo. Mkhitarian penned 9 songs on the album while arranging 2 traditional Armenian folks songs including, "Gakavik", by Komitas. With "Yeraz", Mkhitarian makes a case of writing the next chapter in Armenia's rich musical history by updating the sound and feel of the classic Armenian folk song. Gor gets down to basics by giving the listener meaningful lyrics, simple arrangements, and melodic hooks creating warm and full-bodied acoustic songs. It's Armenian music as never been heard before. Fresh, accessible, and ground-breaking are the only words to describe "Yeraz". Guest musicians include Aharon Stayman and Jason Demerjian. ABOUT GOR MKHITARIAN The emergence of

singer-songwriter Gor Mkhitarian reflects the best of the underground music scene now evolving in Armenia. A native of Vanazor, Armenia, Mkhitarian was born in 1973 and now resides in both Vanazor and Yerevan. Known as the lead guitarist for one of Armenia's best-known rock bands, Lav Elie, Mkhitarian is currently a member of Force Major in addition to his new solo career. Mixing a blend of rock, folk, and Armenian traditional music, Mkhitarian has created a distinct sound that is both compelling and fresh. Some of Mkhitarian's musical influences include Simon Garfunkel, Elliot Smith, and The Dave Matthews Band to name a few. Traces of Rouben Haghverdian, Bob Dylan and Harout Bezjian can also be heard in his solo material. What has made Mkhitarian a favorite in Armenia is the combination of his unique songwriting abilities in addition to his stunning modern arrangements of Armenian folk music. THE GOR INTERVIEW: This Gor Mkhitarian interview was conducted for Pomegranate Music by Aram Hajian.

The interview was taken in Yerevan, Armenia in October of 2001 AH: How did you learn to play guitar?

Gor: I taught myself primarily. I had a guitar when I was fifteen, but didn't take it seriously until age 21.

AH: Are there any friends who got you interested in music? Gor: From 1992-1994, I sang in a church choir in Vanadzor. "Sarer", the first song on the album was one of the songs was performed. Another choir member and friend of mine, David Arshakian, arranged this song for a rock group we had started together. The idea of a traditional Armenian tune in a contemporary musical setting worked out beautifully, I became excited about developing the idea. David taught me a great deal about melody in and of itself. I must also mention Mehr Manukian (friend and songwriting partner in "Lav Eli"), who taught me about melody within a harmonic context. Aaron Stayman helped me appreciate that my songwriting style is essentially derived from melody. This solidified my approach to composition. AH: Name some of your influences both musical and non-musical?

Gor: In the non-musical category, I'd place William Saroyan, Mark Twain, and Herman Melville. Among my deepest musical influences there is my mom. I recall her singing folk and spiritual songs to me as a child. In modern western rock, I really like Dave Matthews. I also love Arto Tunçboyacıyan, he is a tremendous musician, who understands the depth and complexity of Armenian music. He is a brilliant cultural ambassador for Armenian culture. AH: Armenian music has a fantastically strong and unique tradition. Do you draw from it? Gor: Most definitely. Armenian music in general is sad, but for me it is uplifting to endure the somberness and recognize the beauty within it. There are also many joyful folk songs, spirituals (sharakans) and church music that has influenced my sense of melody. While Armenian music is traditionally sorrowful, now is the time for music

that inspires hope and optimism. AH: Do you think it would be the same for a non-Armenian drawing upon this tradition or do you feel a stronger attachment as an Armenian? Gor: I grew up with this music and it is part of my life. I don't, however, feel compelled to draw upon it other than when the song calls for it. For instance, I don't feel obligated to throw a duduk in the mix just because I am an Armenian musician. I use whatever the music demands. AH: You live in a country that has gone through tremendous social and political change in the past ten years. Has that influenced your writing? How? Gor: Having experienced hunger and cold around me, I feel I can paint authentic, emotional sketches in my songs. Perhaps living here has heightened my senses to loneliness, happiness, sadness, and pain. While technically, the last ten years have symbolized freedom, more than anything it has meant ambiguity and insecurity for Armenians. This atmosphere of confusion and doubt about the future influences my thinking and therefore my writing. AH: You have always been involved in playing and writing. Tell me about some of your earlier projects. Gor: In Vanadzor, there has always been a solid performing tradition. My first Vanadzor group "Snack" was formed by a drummer and singer, Ashot Chobanian. We played that version of "Sarar" and many other things as well. We recorded a double album of 17 songs. In 1996, Mehr Manukian and I formed "Lav Eli". We continue to play as "Lav Eli" today. In 1997, I went to Moscow to work for a year. I did some playing there as well with Russian bands. I've recorded two album with "Lav Eli". I also recorded an album with a side project called "Force Major" in 2000. AH: Do you feel the material on the new album is similar to what you have written in the past? Gor: No. This style is a first for me. Previously, I have always written for a standard rock combo (electric guitar, bass, drums)-this is a big change. It's a simpler sound, just acoustic guitar, banjo and percussion. In the past, the music had always taken precedence over the lyrics. This time I intended to have the lyrics and music have equal importance. On this album I felt the need to have the music more strongly reflect the words. AH: This album will expose many western listeners to your music for the first time. Do you have any message to convey to this new audience? Gor: Many people listening to modern Armenian music know pop singers, Tata and Nune. I would like people not to base their opinions of Armenian music solely on this style. I encourage them to see what else is coming out of Armenia. AH: Your solo album features two other musicians. Who are they and how did you meet them? Gor: I've known Jason (Demerjian-percussion) for five years. He was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Stepanavan. We met through a mutual friend in Vanadzor and became very close. Aaron (Stayman-banjo/guitar), a current Peace Corps Volunteer, did his training

in Vanadzor last summer. I would frequently distract him from his classes to drink beer and play guitar. In both cases the playing relationship is based on friendship. AH:What's next? Gor: We are working on another album. The style will be similar to that of the previous album, but with an emphasis on richer instrumentation, I envision flute, strings, accordion, and more percussion. As for the future, God knows.

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