

## Mp3 Gershon Veroba - Impressions



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14 Songs, "an entire hour of musical power." 11 parodies--Contemporary pop hits, authentically re-composed with lyrics depicting themes in Jewish life, co-composed by Seymour Rockoff and Schlock Rock's Lenny Solomon, PLUS 3 original hebrew hits. 14 MP3 Songs WORLD: Judaica, POP: Power Pop Details: REVIEW-Jewish Press: FIRST "IMPRESSIONS": HIS BEST YET By Yael Sara Haber It's close to 20 years-and way more than twice as many albums, concerts and searing "guest appearances", but Gershon Veroba-the name synonymous with groundbreaking projects like Judaea, Variations and countless others, has finally created his musical "watermark". It's called Impressions-and obligatory wordplay references to "first impressions" aside, this album is bound to make a powerfully entertaining first impression on a market that's "heard it all". First of all, let's clarify by saying that comparing this to Gershon's recently re-released "Variations" series (wonderful in their own right) while natural, is a major understatement. A better way to describe Impressions is that it "picks up where Variations leaves off". A fuller more polished sound combined with a more eclectic song selection (how about Earth Wind and Fire?). In addition, the inspired choice of "secular" material and a more inspired performance (face it, there's only one Gershon Veroba), the album ends with 3 Hebrew songs by Eli Gerstner, producer and composer for The Chevrah Menucha . These tunes showcase Gershon's formidable talents on more traditional material Fact is, Gershon is about the only performer in the Jewish music arena that could "pull off" (not to mention pull together) a project with the dynamic scope of Impressions. Think about it. Unlike most albums where the star basically is performing material created for his particular vocal style, the Impressions formula requires Gershon to emulate a number of diverse vocal styles for the songs, lyrics and underlying message to be truly effective. Personally, I found his Neil Diamond-esque version of "The Next Flight" (aka, "Heart light") to be disturbingly authentic. Then again, when you realize that Gershon is

in fact, the son of a cantor, the "Jazz Singer" connection makes sense. The truly unique component of this project is that, unlike most albums that serve primarily to entertain, Impressions also serves as a tool to educate and stimulate the listener with various aspects of the Jewish experience. From "Shabbos Day" (Chicago's "Saturday in the Park") to "That's What Praying Is" (Celine Dion's "That's the Way It Is") to the aliyah-themed "The Next Flight", to the semi-autobiographical "Late in the Evening" (Paul Simon), every one of the 11 "secular songs" challenge the listener to identify with parts of our heritage. Because it does it in the context of easily-relatable commercial pop tunes, it makes these themes way more palatable than any book or lecture ever could. And because it's Gershon executing it, there's a high level of entertainment value as well. Close your eyes, and you're listening to Eric Clapton, Neil Diamond, Green Day, the Beatles-in short a Billboard top 100 artist roster-all courtesy of Gershon's massive vocal and performance talents. If initial listener reactions are any indication (and they usually are), it is my sincere hope the album's distributor, Izzy Taubenfeld of Sameach Music, has ordered plenty of copies because this is one album with both the depth and breadth of material to comfortably cross over to all segments of the Jewish market. This should come as no surprise. After all, Gershon is more than a recording talent, in reality, he's one of the precious few performers whose electric style is far from merely limited to the studio. On the contrary, he's of the rarer breed whose stage performance actually eclipses the usually more controlled studio one. Of course, Gershon's range isn't limited to impersonating pop singers. As you'll hear from the Hebrew "bonus section" of the album, composed, arranged and produced by Gerstner, Mr. Veroba is more than just "at home" with Jewish/Chassidic pop. As he does on the American tunes, he manages to push these songs and himself to the musical limit. Kudos to Eli Gerstner for creating tunes that seem to have been tailor-made for Gershon. The surest way to ascertain the caliber of a performer is by his sense of confidence-is he afraid to be overshadowed by arrangements, material or back up singers? Considering that Gershon employed the talents of New York's most popular fusion band, The Funk Filharmonic, Neshoma Orchestra, as well as a guest appearance by Lev Tahor, one would have to say that this is one performer confident enough not to worry about sharing the spotlight-especially if it makes for a better product. Impressions isn't merely a better product, it's Gershon's best yet. And considering his formidable 2 decades of musical contributions, that's a statement in itself.

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