

Howie Newman's new CD: *When You're Happy*

Clever lyrics, great musicianship make for a fun ride

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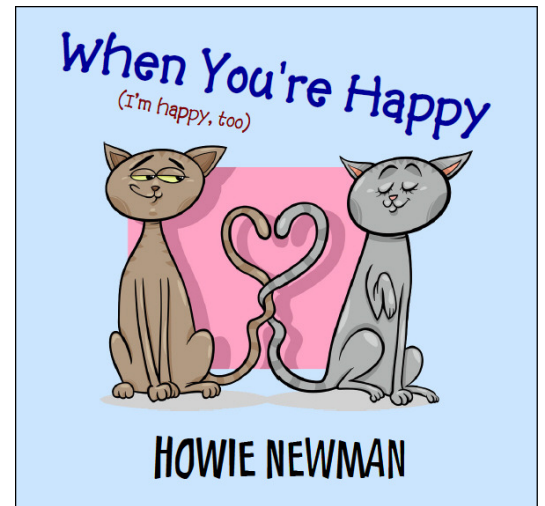
When You're Happy named one of the Top 15 albums of 2016 by Nick Noble of WICN (for details, see next page)

This new collection of songs by Howie Newman explores the various facets of everyday life – marriage, parallel parking, coffeehouses, old cars, parenthood and money – with a mostly whimsical twist.

Except for the electric guitar on one track, it's pretty much an acoustic album, utilizing piano, drums, bass, fiddle, guitars, mandolin, flute, clarinet and saxophone to augment Newman's upbeat rhythms.

But it's definitely not traditional folk music. The CD is equal parts country-rock, jazz, pop, swing, blues and Americana, with tight arrangements and pleasing vocal harmonies. Six songs are humorous and the others provide poignant moments that will resonate with people of all ages. The clever lyrics and catchy music keep you tuned in.

Newman, who produced the album, plays acoustic guitar and harmonica, adding backup vocals and solid second-guitar work.



Contributing musicians

The title track is a rocking swing tune that features Billy Novick's jazzy clarinet riffs weaving through Tim Ray's nimble piano playing. Ray, a longtime pianist for Lyle Lovett, has performed with Aretha Franklin and Bonnie Raitt, and really shines on this album, adding his dazzling keyboard work on two other tracks.

There are many other fine performances, including Joe Kessler's funky fiddle licks on *That Old Car*, Rob Ignazio's rhythmic bass lines and some nifty flute accompaniment by Newman's son Keith on *Reality Check*. Local favorite Janet Feld chips in with some nice harmony vocals.

Refreshing and fun

When You're Happy strikes a nice balance between lighthearted fun and the things that touch our deepest emotions. Overall, it's an enjoyable, easy-listening ride and an amusing album, from start to finish. The lyrics - and the music - will keep you smiling throughout.

The songs

My Baby Can't Parallel Park

Culled from real-life experiences, this rootsy rocker unveils revelations about a previously untapped subject. You may have heard a live version of it on NPR's *Car Talk*.

Our Kids Aren't Kids Anymore

Watching your children grow up is quite an experience.

When You're Happy, I'm Happy, too

A how-to guide for successful relationships.

Low Tech

Think about it: Do you really need all that modern technology?

The Ballad of Mike Hessman

Minor League Home Run King

It's about a guy who set the all-time minor league record for home runs. Was this a blessing or a curse?

Where Is Everybody?

Recorded live at Arts on the Green, Shrewsbury, Mass., April 9, 2016

When the size of the audience isn't quite what you had hoped for, there's gotta be a reason, right?

Reality Check

Is the glass half-full or half-empty in this relationship?

That Old Car

A treasure trove of memories from a 19-year-old car.

It's Only Money

There's a fine line between hard work and obsession for the almighty dollar.

My Last Cup of Coffee

Another true story, this one is about a caffeine-fueled teenage trauma. And an NBA playoff game.