

Michael Johnathon Pirate

A 'Non-Protest' Protest album

Folksinger Michael Johnathon has always looked at the world around him for inspiration. Over the course of one month, he dove headlong into writing the songs that make up the *Pirate* album. "It was a painful record to write," he says. "I was having to look inward at every success and failure I've ever had. I had to make it personal, and sometimes it's hard to admit that you're not the man you wish you were, or that you thought you were."

Pirate is an album of majestic failure inspired by the volcanic movement of global politics and society changes. The album is a song cycle of social and political love poems; a musical missive about the past and everything we should have learned, but failed.

Johnathon sets the tone for the album with the beautiful but dark opening track, **The Room**, then follows it with his masterful "**Assassins In The Kingdom**," a cryptic composition about war that he began writing just after 9-11. "It sat in my folder for several years," he says. "It has finally come to life on this album." The song — which beckons influences of Bob Dylan, The Beatles, and Pink Floyd — was composed in four movements in keeping with the ominous, gothic spirit of the lyrics.

On "**The Accusation**," he pointedly targets world leaders who use their self-inflamed egos to shepherd millions of people to follow them into needless senseless wars. "I was thinking about the absurdity of Saddam Hussein and others that violently rattled their cage only to fail," he said. "Look at Hitler. Everything he dreamed is gone and all he did was kill millions of people - for nothing. This is a song against hate and war. The world seems so angry these days, led by angry people who are only concerned more about their own power, influence and money. And yet, sadly, it's always been this way."

The album is tempered with humor in the song "**Flyin**" a gospel-like ode to the absurdity of a debt-driven society. "**Cosmic Banjo**" is an instrumental driven by the rare use of a long-neck Pete Seeger five-string, with a rock band and a horn quartet.

On the gorgeous "**Windows**," Johnathon challenges himself to write honestly. "Destroy the poem you expose the rhyme / So I must sing the way I feel / Uneasy heads lying beneath the crown / So truth must rule the rhyme / In the image of your past / Is a sad souvenir in the windows of your mind."

Dylan's "**Masters of War**" is given a poignant reading built around Johnathon's haunting banjo. "Even though he wrote it about The Bay of Pigs," Johnathon said, "the song remains timeless and universal. I felt it fit this project perfectly."

Johnathon is quick to clarify *Pirate* is not a protest album. "These are 'non-protest' protest songs," he says. "A musical statement about our modern life, world, society and politics."

Michael Johnathon has built a solid career in the arts as a songwriter, playwright of the successful *Walden: The Ballad of Thoreau*, composer of the opera *Woody: For the People* and as the host of the live audience broadcast of the popular *WoodSongs Old Time Radio Hour* with a radio audience of over two million listeners each week on each week on 500 public radio stations, public television coast-to-coast, plus American Forces Radio Network in 173 nations, and now, on the RFD TV Network.



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