

THE BEST JEWISH MUSIC YOU'VE NEVER HEARD AND WHY.



by: Sruly Meyer

The Number One question people ask us at Sameach is when the next new CD is coming out. We have an old joke around the office that before Lev Tahor 4 was even released, people were asking about Lev Tahor 5. The funny part is that it's even a joke. People really did ask that question. They same went for Chevra 4 before Chevra 3 even came out. People are always hungry for new music.

So many albums are released during each season that many great albums go unnoticed. We usually release somewhere between 5-10 new CD's during the Chanukah season. Let's not forget that's just from Sameach Music. If you figure in releases from all the other distributors you could have as many as 15-20 new CD's or more. Also keep in mind that somewhere between 2-3 new DVD's are also and you have yourself a real musical dilemma.

Let's look at it from the typical Jewish music fan's perspective. Even the most dedicated Jewish music fans won't buy more then 4 CD's during each season. Of course you can space out your purchases but how does a CD get into that first wav? This is a problem which arises from having so many CD's to choose from at one time.

The problem is that when a season ends, everything new that came out at the time immediately becomes old in peoples minds. For example, a CD released around Purim ends up being in the stores from Purim until Pesach. If you count the 3 weeks before Purim through the end of Chol Hamoed that ends up being an 8 week season. When the Lag Ba'omer season comes around that leaves many good CD's unnoticed from the prior season.

Let's go deeper into the reason a CD may go unnoticed in the first place. The key for any album to do well is that it has to consist of at least the 3 of the following ingredients. Quality songs, a lot of Buzz of course a lot of Mazel.

In almost every case where someone is going to buy a CD they have to know what they are buying. It has to at least have buzz. What's buzz? It's the highly anticipated release of a singer or groups album that has you running to your local Judaica store to be the first one to have it. Rarely have we ever released a CD from an artist that nobody ever heard of and it did well. Two recent artists that released their first CD's both had tremendous buzz before they came out. People were calling daily for months before those CD's hit stores asking when it would be released.

Ohad is a good example of buzz + quality + mazel = success. When Ohad's first CD was released there was so much buzz that it became the CD everyone talked about right away. I remember sitting in a local restaurant with my wife and I heard some bochurim at the table next to us discussing Ohad. It was interesting to see buzz spread first hand. One of the boys who had heard about Ohad from another friend was telling the other three boys about Ohad's CD.

I recently asked different websites and blogs online to pose the question "Which albums you felt went unnoticed or were underrated?" I can tell you which CD's I personally felt were underrated, but that'd only be my opinion. I wanted to share with you a more general view.

There were a lot of CD's named both online and via email, but a few kept popping up. One of those CD's was **V'zoicher**, which had songs composed by Avi Kula and songs sung by Ari Goldwag, Mendy Wald and Shloime Dachs. This CD didn't receive nearly as much attention as it should have. I can't remember now what other CD's came out at the time, but I do remember it came out during an even more then usually packed Chanukah season

The next season brought many more new CD's V'zoicher went unnoticed. V'zoicher is a really wonderful CD with some beautifully composed and performed songs. All the artists on this CD are at their best including the last song which featured all three of these singers.

Another album which was mentioned many times was V'Havienu. This CD is presented by Eliyahu Dolinsky with songs composed, arranged and directed by Dani Kunstler. The songs are sung by Dani, Yitzchok "Scratchy" Yenowitz & Fully Eisenberger. This is a CD which also came out in America a while after it came out in Israel and not enough people knew what it was. But every time I bring up this topic with anyone, I hear this CD's name as an example of a great album that didn't get enough attention.

One of the same people who posted on the website about **V'Havienu** also mentioned another album. **Portraits of Soul** by Andy Friedman. If you haven't heard of this cd you need to go to our website and listen to the clips. Better yet, email Yodo at OlamRadio.com or myself at ShmaisRadio.com and request to hear a song. This CD will amaze you at how sweet the music and the songs are. Baruch Abbitan who was the child soloist that sang G-d Bless America at HASC 15 sings on this with his father Meyer.

The point of this article is not to plug these CD's. The point is to simply remind you that there are many CD's out there that might not be new, but will not disappoint you either. Just because a CD doesn't have the other two factors (mazel and buzz) it could still have the quality factor.

Another group that should have created much more buzz was **8th Day**. For many people who want more diversity, originality and creativity in their Jewish Music. This group is custom built for you. It literally creates its own style and sound. It's unlike anything you've ever heard before. The group is made up of brothers, who just happen to be nephews of this Jewish music singer you may have heard of before. Avraham Fried. You can easily hear the family resemblance in their voices. The songs are all based in Chassidic discourse and the music is always fresh.

Here are some more CD's that you should look into to that more people have suggested.

U'Shmuel Bekorei Sh'mo by Azrial Ganz's Shira Productions. This CD features all new songs by Yosef Karduner, The Nochi Krohn Band, Aaron Razel, Ben Zion Solomon and other similiar artists. It's a great introduction to many talented singers. **Eitan and Shlomo Katz** are also both on that CD and also both have very good albums of their own.

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Another person e-mailed me an entire list of albums. Shachar, **Oneg**, Mendy Jerufy's **Merakdin**, Roza D'shabbos, Shloime Kaufman's **Emes**, Sandy Shmueil's **Ad Motai**, Avner Levy's **Hodu Lashem**, Baruch Aboud's **Netzor**, Ira Heller's **Agudah**, **Impressions** by Gershon Veroba, Moishe Illowitz's **Veyazor**.

One thing is certain, there are plenty of examples to choose from. There is no short or even a definitive list. I remember when MBC's **The Alumni** came out I thought these guys would be the next Chevra or Lev Tahor. I really enjoyed that album, but I don't think that CD got nearly enough attention.

Shlomo Simcha and Dudi Hertz were on a CD from Benny Herskowitz that really went under the radar and should have been a smash hit of a CD. The CD was called **Hamenagain** and if anyone out there enjoyed the Aish CD's you would love this CD.

Here are some recent CD's. Shmuel Brazil's **Borcheinu**, Sruli Ginsburg's second CD - **Az Yibaka**, Omek Hadavar's debut CD **The Depth of the Matter**. Blue Fringe's last CD **The Whole World Lit Up** was also a bit underrated in my own opinion. It's not really the same style as their first two CD's, this CD covers very traditional songs that we all sing in Shul or at the Shabbos table every week.

It's worth taking a risk on these CD's. That's the really the point of this article. You have to take some risks. Today there are so many ways to really research a CD before you buy it. There is this habit of people always wanting something *new*. If it's not new it can't be good. But if you think like that you may miss so many great albums. Next time you're in a Judaica store, instead of asking the salesman what's *new*. Why don't you ask them what's good. Ask them if there is a particular CD that may not be popular in name but they know to be good none the less.

If you hear a CD and are surprised by how good it is, tell a friend. After all - that is how buzz is created, right? Don't keep it to yourself, the more people who are aware of a CD's quality the more CD's are sold. That means more music from that artist for you to enjoy. The best buzz is word of mouth so if you like something then tell someone.



Sruly Meyer works in the graphic design and marketing department at Sameach Music. He is also the co host of the Sameach Music Podcast which can be downloaded for free at sameachmusicpodcast.com. If you'd like to add your own CD's which you felt went unnoticed or underrated please go to www.designsbysruly.com/Blog/ and add yours to the mix.