

Mark Gaignard & The Also Ran

Mixtape Maestro, August 1, 2008

<http://mixtapemaestro.net/?s=mark+gaignard>



After spending over a decade fronting Floridian pop/ rock band Big Sky, Mark Gaignard starts a new venture with accompanying band The Also-Rans on his upcoming Backspace Records release, *We All Need Lies*.

The premiere effort takes Gaignard's matured male reflections on everything from relationships and the struggles of everyday mundane living to the false facades of Hollywood and neatly wraps them in a crisply-produced package of radio-friendly guitar-pop with a slight rootsy edge. Both the arrangements and Mark's voice carry a warm, familiar pleasantness that makes the eleven tracks featured easy to digest and sing along to, but don't take that for meaning that the project is hopelessly bland.

Gaignard, alongside co-writer/-producer Ben Rowell (also from Big Sky), laces the album's solid instruments work with smart lyrics that consistently capture and hold the listener's attention. Hollywood and the people trying to get into it, escape from it, or survive in it, lands as a recurring topic that pulls out some good tunes, like the sharp "The Inside", which takes a look at the instant celebrity culture obsession we're currently engulfed in ("Sweet salvation is only a bulbflash away/ So strike a candid pose/ Remember timing is everything/...Won't you bear your sweet soul soon as you find it, baby?") or "Tinseltown", a somber chronicling of a superstar that never was. "You should know, you're not the only bust in Tinseltown," it's hook consoles.

Elsewhere, the focus falls on the toil of just living life and getting older. Repentance over previous doings come to fruition on the intimate, flugelhorn-aided album closer "Apologies"; giving your clothes away to the "Army of

Salvation", quitting drinking and selling off all your CD's (except that precious Stevie Wonder LP) does little to alleviate a spirit-suffocating, three-job-having existence on "This Monstrosity"; while, "One By One By One" spotlights the saddening realization that one is enjoying the last "good ol' days" session with close pals before life sends them all in different directions ("Don't tell me these days are over/ Don't tell me this can never last/...I'm not ready to call today the past").

Add to those aforementioned gems the toe-tapping opening rocker "Parade" and a damn near flawless one-sided love ode entitled, well, "Flawless", and *We All Need Lies* ends up as a satisfying set that launches Gaignard's new musical era off to a promising start.