



TOM STAHL: *An outpouring of songs about everyday concerns and events.*

SUCCESS STORY

TOM STAHL

By TONI RUBERTO
News Contributing Reviewer

Sometimes it takes a bit of bad luck for people to find their true talent. Before back surgery put Tom Stahl out of work 2½ years ago, he hadn't picked up the guitar that had been sitting around the house for a few years, nor had he explored his natural talents as a songwriter.

It was only during his convalescence that Stahl found his musical side, writing a few songs to pass the time. His wife, Louie, thought the music had potential and urged him to take the next step — which landed him at an open mike at Nietzsche's.

"I played three songs at about 3 in the morning and it was empty — just me, Mike Meldrum and the bartender," Stahl recalls. That was enough. Meldrum, a respected singer, songwriter and producer, liked what he heard and wanted to showcase Stahl — who needed to come up with additional material in a hurry.

The songs Stahl wrote to support a full set became the groundwork for his 1995 debut CD, "I Wanna Be Ignorant." The collection of 18 heartfelt and poetic songs included "Louie," a song the devoted family man wrote for his wife. "I wouldn't even be close to where I am without her," Stahl says about his wife, who also manages his career. "She pushes me along. She's the engine."

For Meldrum, who once called Stahl "the James Joyce of Buffalo folk music," Stahl's talents are obvious. "He is a writer of classics," Meldrum says. "He has a real instinct. He understands you have 3½ minutes to tell a story, and he does it. A song like 'I Wanna Be Ignorant' stands up there with all of the great songs, including those written by everyone from Bob Dylan to Paul Simon. It's just as good as anything I've ever heard."

Upcoming: Hamburg's "Burgerfest," July 19; Scooter's in Blasdell, July 29.

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