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Tom Stahl - *I Wanna Be Ignorant*

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Preposterous is the singer/songwriter who thinks he can strap on an acoustic guitar, blow into a harmonica, and pull off sixty-plus minutes and eighteen songs worth of a debut recording. Even Steve Forbert, who forged one of the better debut acoustic recordings, had more than his guitar and harmonica to rely on. In a recent interview that same Forbert said, "You can only be new once, but when you're new you don't know that." Well, Tom Stahl is new, and this recording brings with it all of the fresh energy Forbert brought to *Alive on Arrival*: hopefully Stahl will truly stay as "ignorant" as the title claims he wishes to be and keep churning out perfectly innocent, perfectly heartfelt recordings like this.

As simple as *I Wanna Be Ignorant* is instrumentally, it's musically as full and complete as a recording could be, thanks to the songs and Stahl's sincere vocal work. Not each of these eighteen songs is a classic, but nearly every one is at least good and several are so good that classic is the only apt description for them. "Barbara Ann" is a ton of emotional power deliv-



ered through simple storytelling. "Claire's Wedding" is the most melodic, memorable bit of wedding advice ever given. "Something In the Air," "What Do You Think That Means?," the title track, and "I've Seen You Somewhere" are also perfect

songs with as pure and attractive melody lines as are apt to be found anywhere.

Tom Stahl isn't perfect - technically. He pushes his voice to reach the higher notes, and with the "one-take" feeling of this recording, there are mistakes to be heard, but sometimes the more you polish a thing the more it loses its originality and freshness. Just ask Steve Forbert. This is Tom Stahl for the first time on a first-take recording, delivering more songs than a logical performer would ever presume to deliver. It's Tom Stahl being ignorant about the business, its expectations, and standard procedures. It's a singer/songwriter with a less-than-perfect voice but with an excellent ear for a melody. He'll only be new once, and I know that. I'm betting, though, that he has the talent to be around for a long time after this first recording. It would be ignorant, however, not to grab this one up now just in case this same kind of magic doesn't happen the second time. It rarely happens even once.

Key Personnel Tom Stahl - vocals; guitar, harmonica; Mary Sequin - harmonies; Mark Stahl - keyboards.

Produced by Tom Stahl