

TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY

DAVID MEAD'S LATEST IS PERSONAL AND PROFOUND

It's hard to believe David Mead is in a good place. After all, the longtime singer/songwriter just emerged from a divorce, his producer hates his new album title and he scrapped the first batch of songs for *Almost and Always* because they were too depressing to release. Yet one listen to the updated version of *Almost* reveals Mead at his absolute best. It's the oft-seen beauty-from-tragedy that marks the 14-song collection and finds the lonesome tenor both triumphant and defeated. As Mead describes it, the trials became a prime place for inspiration to take root.

"Of course, this is just my perspective, obviously, because a lot of people deal with this differently," Mead says, "but no matter how you come out of the relationship part of all of this, it's impossible to avoid a lot of dynamic and a lot of change. That's just going to be inherent. That's usually a pretty good time for the creative process to happen. If you get too comfortable, there's less inspiration to do anything."

Of course, it takes time to lick your wounds and find the proper headspace to even compose a song. For Mead, the time didn't last as long as it could have for others.

"I was fortunate," Mead explains. "I had a really shitty time of it for about six months or so, and then some lights started to come on. I had some very good help in processing the emotional side of that, so I wrote several batches of songs. I wrote one set of songs that was supposed to be *Almost and Always* that turned out pretty dark. I was fortunate to get some advice that it might not be a very listenable record to make, so I didn't."

That advice came courtesy of friend and producer Brad Jones. The counsel may seem harsh, but Mead acknowledges it was dead-on.

"He didn't want me to put out an album, especially with his name on it, that would be difficult to



COURTESY DAVID MEAD

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— David Mead —

listen to," Mead says with a laugh. "We're all at the point where we've done enough art for art's sake. It's just not really that interesting unless there's some sort of participatory, interactive element to it. So when we make records together, we're very conscious of an audience — not in the sense

that we're trying to tailor-make music to find some larger audience — but music, to me, is made to be listened to. I stopped playing in my bedroom a long time ago."

In the end, it was Jones' experience and expertise that allowed Mead to trust his judgment.

DAVID MEAD

WHO'S WHO

David Mead

FORMED

1998 in Nashville, Tenn.

LABEL

Cheap Lullaby

LATEST RELEASE

Almost and Always (2009)

ON THE WEB

www.davidmead.com

"[Jones] understands a lot of things that bring a listener joy," Mead says. "It's not like he can't have a couple or three songs that are really dark or even an entire record of that, but you have to do that really well. Maybe he just wasn't impressed with my version of it."

Once the original tunes were shelved, fresh material began to emerge with Mead's new songwriting partner, Bill DeMain. Instead of producing the intensely personal songs from before, the co-writers allowed the songs to become universal in nature.

"I went back to this group of songs that Bill DeMain and I had written. The focus turned out to be strangely prophetic, but a lot of them were torch songs to nobody, and I felt like they, in a roundabout way, described the situation in a better way than the ugly songs that I had written. Well, they weren't ugly, but they were intense. They were pretty jagged. There was no perspective on the feeling at the point that they were written."

It's there in the tension that Mead's *Almost and Always* exists as a relatable compendium of weathered songs with enough of Mead's personal fingerprints for one to appreciate both the art and the artist involved.

— Matt Conner