



GUS

Word of Mouth Parade

When I lived in Seattle, I used to have a view of Lake Washington. The view allowed me to deal with the rain, deal with my broken relationship, y'know, with that view I felt I could deal with almost anything." But when the opportunity presented itself to re-focus and collaborate on songwriting with Greg Wells, Gus found himself pulled away from his favorite view and heading back to his native Los Angeles. "Where I'm living now, it's okay. I can see the same mountains that I used to look at when I was a kid growing up... blah blah blah," he trails off. 'Blah blah blah' is Gus's way of saying the conversation is getting too self-conscious, too self-absorbed.

But then he pauses, and adds, "It's a weird thing when you try to move on. Sometimes you think you've grown a bit but you realize you're still, in a sense, the same person to your core... it's really hard to change what you are at the core."

The last few years have offered Gus an emotional and spiritual journey that provides a continued source of reflection. None-the-less, the "first person" is something that Gus strives to avoid on *Word Of Mouth Parade*, his sophomore album for ALMO Sounds. The eleven pop songs on *Word Of Mouth Parade* share a genesis from Gus's life experiences but ultimately, leave plenty of space for the listener's personal interpretation.

"Basically, the songs on *Word Of Mouth Parade* deal with relationships of love, friendships, trust, lack of trust, fear, denial," says Gus, adding, "the record is essentially about communicating and the breakdown of communication."

"The whole *song thing*, that's always hard," says Gus when discussing the new material. "I really don't try to have some grand scheme. You write a song, you just want to be honest, and for me, deal with whatever's going on in my life."

Gus takes his cues from a classic singer/songwriter tradition, citing Nick Drake, Cat Stevens and Carole King as sources of inspiration. "I really like starting with an acoustic guitar. The way you hold it against your chest and feel it resonate. It just naturally turns the song inward, y'know... the whole Leonard Cohen trip."

When it came to preparing for *Word Of Mouth Parade*, Gus knew exactly what his ultimate goals were, and the kind of production values he needed to achieve them. "I was going for a really warm, natural sound and needed someone who had an understanding of music and someone who would challenge me, someone who wouldn't tell me exactly what I wanted to hear." His search for a foil and collaborator ended when he met producer/engineer/mixer Mark Endert (Fiona Apple, Creeper Lagoon).

"Mark was exactly who I needed," says Gus, "these days, everyone's going full digital using Pro Tools and we didn't. We went full organic."

On Gus's eponymous '96 debut, he was responsible for writing, singing, guitar, bass, drums and just about every aspect of recording. However, *Word Of Mouth Parade*

features an impressive line-up of talent on every song, and the stable of seasoned musicians allowed Gus to focus on what he does best. "It took a lot off my shoulders because I only had to focus on playing acoustic or electric guitar and singing," says Gus. "I didn't want to repeat my last record. I enjoyed it but I wanted to try something different. This approach was scary, it involved placing huge amounts of trust in other people."

Beginning with the album's opening track, "Baby Blue Airplane," *Word of Mouth Parade* unfolds many highlights, like the dreamy and expansive "Summerday," the soporific title track with its fleeting glimpse of moody trip-hop, and the seductive single "Laugh I Could Learn To Love." The album also features plaintive moments, like the gentle acoustic ballad, "Going Our Way."

Word of Mouth Parade is full of character, with Gus's warm, earthy voice front and center. It's a powerful voice that's always in control, often descending to become light and delicate, then exploding with frustration and disappointment.

The one element that remains prevalent throughout the album is Gus's skill as a songwriter, and his knack for leading and provoking the listener. He desires a communication with the listener and, yes, perhaps a sense of veneration from them without everyone demanding an absolute agreement. "The whole 'self-important' thing, there's no time for that. You spend a lot of time growing up, trying to be profound. Me, I'm just trying to live my life, have a good time, refine and progress... blah blah blah."

Gus – all vocals, acoustic & electric guitars

with

Joey Waronker – drums

Carla Azar – drums, background vocals "Please Don't Go"

Dave Palmer – piano, keyboards, "noises"

Patrick Warren –keyboards, Chamberlin, Wurlitzer

Dave Monsey – bass

Peter Plath – guitar, mando-cello

Greg Leisz – slide

Louis Conti – percussion

John Philip Shenale – string arrangements

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