



Mark Olson & Gary Louris **“Ready For The Flood”** New West Records

Produced by Chris Robinson of The Black Crowes, and originally scheduled to appear in September last year on Hacktone Records which released Olson’s much lauded 2007 *divorce* album **“The Salvation Blues,”** at the last minute the former band-mates moved to New West, the label that, early last year, released **“Vagabonds”** Louris’ solo debut. Robinson also produced the latter recording. Following Olson’s acrimonious departure from Minneapolis based band The Jayhawks the pair toured together for the first time in over a decade a few years back, and the sessions for **“Ready For The Flood”** took place over an eight day period early in 2007. That seems like a while back, a sure case of the duo release playing second string to the solo deals.

Recorded at Sage & Sound Studios in Hollywood, according to Olson the vocals were recorded live. Robinson played harmonica and sang, and the session players include George Reiff [bass], Jason Yates [Hammond B-3 organ] and Bob Peeler [dobro, banjo]. Back in October 2001 the pair, reconciled, penned songs for the movie **“The Rookie,”** but they weren’t used. Years elapsed and following the demise of The Jayhawks, the duo undertook a series of live shows during late 2005 and early 2006. **“Ready For The Flood”** is a logical product of their renewed friendship and collaboration as writers. It appears that this collection features new and old material, some over a decade old that The Jayhawks never got around to recording.

The principle components in the sound-scape are the duo’s voices and acoustic guitars – strummed and occasionally finger-picked – supported by the odd embellishment. Subjectively the lyrics run the gamut of dour and dark [“Black Eyes”] to light and airy [“Life’s Warm Sheets”]. Louris adopts a Dylanesque approach to phrasing the “Bicycle” lyric, there are ‘raw, bare to the bone’ paeans to love lost “Doves And Stones” and “Turn Your Pretty Name Around,” while the album title is drawn from the lyric of the closing cut “The Trap’s Been Set.” This reunion release possesses the feel of two buddies enjoying a laid back, late night pickin’, singin’ and harmonisin’ session in a rustic old kitchen. Understated, but subtly engaging.

Folkwax Score 7 out of 10.

Arthur Wood.

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