



December 7, 2006

Mark Newman

Must Be a Pony

(Danal Music)

8/10

When you hear the opening acoustic riff of “Dead Man’s Shoes,” the first track on former Tao Jones frontman Mark Newman’s CD *Must Be a Pony*, you suddenly feel as if you are whizzing along a desert road out west, and up to no good. The droning, menacing cadence tells the sad story of the song’s protagonist being wayward, on the run and in deep. To Newman’s credit, the rest of the songs do the same, each presenting vocal and music in sharp sync with one another. Newman is a very talented player, and in addition to handling (tremendously) guitar on each track, he also helped out on lap steel, bass, organ, percussion, keys and dobro throughout the record, not to mention handling lead vocal duties. Newman also enlisted some solid players for the sessions, including drummer Anton Fig for three of the tracks and Steve Holley of Wings. Newman is a creative storyteller, too, as he sings of bad love (“A Love in Vain”), being lost in life (“Hard in the Rain”) and facing the changes of maturing (the title track). Newman is an old soul with a road-weathered spirit, and *Must Be a Pony* does not shy away from that fact. After listening to the record, it’s hard to imagine another way to be in life. —Butcher Jones

