

Jesse Malin



Ryan Adams and the Boss occupy this artist's musical community

JESSE MALIN CONSIDERED moving to Los Angeles last year when he was there recording *Glitter in the Gutter*, his third solo album. He didn't take long to reconsider.

"The right turn on the red light wasn't enough of a cultural advantage," he cracks from his New York City home. Malin's beloved Manhattan has always been chief among his



Jesse Malin
Glitter in the Gutter
[Adeline/Warner]

influences, flowing like a gritty river through rough-edged pop songs populated by characters caught in its vibrant current.

"You walk out your door and get that spontaneous thing I didn't get in Los Angeles," says Malin. "Sitting in an old-man bar or a coffee shop, you'll get a story, or you work stuff out walking through the crowd, feeling the heartbeats of people, the energy."

That energy permeates *Glitter in the Gutter*, which falls between the stark confessional tone of Malin's 2003 solo debut, *The Fine Art of Self Destruction*, and the glossier 2004 follow-up, *The Heat*. Writing first on tour and then at home while he searched for a new label after his folded, Malin winnowed 30 demos to an album comprising 11 new originals, a

re-worked tune from *The Heat* and a cover of the Replacements' "Bastards of Young."

"I didn't want this to be a long record," he says. "I wanted this to be 43 minutes of tough pop songs with lyrics that were about more than the disco."

Malin also wanted a hopeful record that reinforced the idea of community at a time when technology isolates people.

"They close record stores, people are in the house watching DVDs, buying online," he says. "To me, playing music is about a community, getting out there and playing live. It's a bond, it's a connection, so I wanted a record that reinforced life."

The album features contributions from Ryan Adams and Foo Fighter Chris Shiflett on guitar, Jakob Dylan on backing vocals and rock icon Bruce Springsteen as a duet partner on the aching ballad "Broken Radio." Malin wrote the song about his mother, who died when he was young. He mailed a copy to Springsteen, a high-profile fan, who offered to sing on it.

"Here's this song I wrote for my mom in some little apartment on the Lower East Side," begins Malin, "not knowing whether I was going to get a record deal, and I'm hearing somebody who's written so many great songs, with his distinctive voice, singing it. You can't put a price on how that feels."

—Eric R. Danton