

## HOWIE BECK

## How To Fall Down In Public

Falling down in public doesn't have to be painful. It can be poetic and entertaining.

On his 4th album, the intimacy of Howie's music is dragged into public view. *How To Fall Down In Public* makes the case that modern melancholy is best understood through sheer sonic pleasure.

In the past, some journalists tagged Howie as "The Woody Allen of Rock." Perhaps not so much for his music, but for his public appearances; sometimes neurotic, sometimes creative, funny and outgoing. His response? "I'm telling you, that scene in *Annie Hall* where he's in the hotel room and cancels his show? That *is* me." Whatever the reason, reviews of Howie's previous albums have been nothing short of glowing.

And so, like Woody Allen, perhaps it is fitting that Howie has experienced some of his greatest success in Europe, as well as conceiving his latest album there.

The album began a world away from Howie's Toronto roots. Some songwriters make a New York album- Howie made a Paris album. In July 2007, he touched down with only his proverbial guitar and a notepad, the first song he wrote being the appropriately-titled "If I Ever Come Home." Having toured in Europe and Scandinavia in 2006 opening first for Nada Surf, and then for Josh Rouse, Howie was eager to return. Temporary exile changed his approach; no longer confined to the bedroom as on his previous 3 albums, Howie's trademark introspection tilted outward. The music became more cinematic. "Fin" is Howie's first full-fledged instrumental composition to be released on a solo album, and it has already been tapped to score the French film "Shoe at Your Foot". However, this is not the first time Howie's music has been sought after to accompany an image. His songs have always simultaneously evoked intimacy and emotional heft, tailor-made for the screen. Though Howie has always existed on the margins of the industry, television shows such as *One Tree Hill*, *Queer as Folk*, *Felicity* and *Buffy the Vampire slayer* have come calling to use his music in the past.

At the legendary Studio Ferber in Paris, Howie began working with long-time friend and collaborator Gonzales (on whose "Soft Power" album Howie played drums). When he finally did "come home", Howie reconnected with some other members of his extended musical family. Having played on Sarah Harmer's *All of Our Names*, Howie called her in to feature on "Beside This Life", a haunting Chet-Bakeresque torch song. And Feist adds her "la la la's" to a song called..."La La La". The album was then recorded and mixed by Howie at his own 4-walls studios in Toronto, Canada.

In the studio, Howie Beck is his own band. His one-man conception of drums, bass, guitars and percussion brings a modern precision to classic song-craft. Though he has no formal musical training, Howie has contributed horn and string arrangements to various albums, in this case by singing parts to other players, one at a time. This all-

around musicianship makes him a true rarity among singers, and it accounts for his frequent studio collaborations on multiple instruments with other artists such as Sarah Harmer, Hayden and Jason Collett.

But the most important collaboration on this album is between Howie Beck the songwriter and Howie Beck the producer. He explains: "The only problem with producing and performing my own albums is that the fighting between the artist and producer don't tend to end well." That said, as the producer of Jason Collett's two most recent albums, *Idols of Exile*, and *Here's To Being Here*, and doing production work on Hayden's yet-to-be-titled release in 2009, his objectivity pointed to a new sonic direction. He waded into the painstaking, precise world of classic-sounding records like Fleetwood Mac's "Rumors" while keeping the honesty and intensely private nature of his songs in place. This double-life on either side of the studio glass makes for music that is both confessional and extroverted. Glazed in both the classic and the modern, Howie Beck's fourth album is at once unique and vaguely familiar. It began with a few words in a notebook in Paris; grew with rollicking piano, finger-snaps and rousing brass arrangements; but in the end, it's Howie Beck dealing with his never ending struggle between the private and the public.

• **Selected reviews of 'Howie Beck'**

"Canada's musical stock has never stood higher" *The London Times*

"It's an emotionally articulate, beautifully plangent pop affair." *Time Out*

"Howie Beck almost makes misery a cool condition" *Q*

"An inspired and cathartic album" Nick Kent, *Liberation, France*

• **Selected reviews of 'Hollow'**

"A staggeringly good pop album – a fragile, forlorn mini-masterpiece. No one has mined their late-20s malaise for songwriting material so poignantly, or tunefully, in ages. Incredible. Hunt this down. Please." *The Toronto Star*

"A brilliantly evocative portrait of emotional loss and mental comedown." *Uncut*

"A classic debut." *Record Collector*

"Hollow is a honeyed reverie from start to finish... this is a treasure trove heaped high with jewels." *MOJO*

**Selected discography**

- songs have appeared in: *One Tree Hill*, *Queer as Folk*, *Felicity*, *Angel*
- has produced albums by: Jason Collett (*Idols of Exile*, *Here's to Being Here* (Arts and Crafts) and songs by Hayden (upcoming release 2009), Josh Rouse (*bedroom classics*)
- has performed as a guest artist on albums by Sarah Harmer (*All Of Our Names*), Gonzales (*Soft Power*, Hayden (*The Closer I Get*, *Skyscraper National Park*, *Elk-Lake Serenade*, *In Field & Town*), Sarah Slean (*Day One*)

**Selected opening act / on tour with:**

- Feist, Sarah Harmer, Josh Rouse, Nada Surf, Jason Collett, Guster, Hayden, Ron Sexsmith, Aimee Mann, Ed Harcourt