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Meet Gabriel Mann

The new year brings a new musical talent

Remember this name: Gabriel Mann. He's coming out with a new album this year, and I will be so bold as to say that he could be the format's hottest new artist in 2005, adding to the core of artists upon which we build our stations. Managed by bigHelium Entertainment, Mann is in the fine hands of innovative long-time manager Hugo Vereker and award-winning promotion wizard Marc Ratner.

Ratner stopped by R&R before the holidays (Vereker was homebound, awaiting the birth of child No. 4) to tell me about his new partnership with bigHelium and their unique way of launching artists and to introduce me to Mann.

A New Chapter

"I met Hugo when I was at DreamWorks," Ratner said. "One of his clients, and one of my favorite bands, Eastmountainsouth, was on the label. We hit it off right away, so much so that I installed a second computer line so he could work out of my office."

"We had a nice run with Eastmountainsouth, and when DreamWorks SKG announced it was selling DreamWorks and closing the company, we immediately decided to form a partnership."

BigHelium is a full-service music company, and with Vereker's ears and Ratner's promotion and marketing experience, it is sure to make headway in 2005. "Hugo is the classic A&R person who finds the jewel in the rough and can really polish it and cut it," Ratner said. "He helps artists develop the songs and the style."

"It's such a great entrepreneurial time, and, with the Internet, a small company can succeed. It's like 1963 again, where a lot of entrepreneurial companies are going out and finding real artists and doing artist development in a way that the major companies haven't for a while."

"We are set up to put out records ourselves or work with labels if we find the right partners. Before, record companies put all the pressure on radio to try to break records, which wasn't fair. In today's world that doesn't work, so we have to do more setup by using the Internet, touring and conducting classic artist development in a really efficient, cost-effective way, so that when we finally come to radio, we've laid a base."

He Da Mann

One of bigHelium's current projects is Gabriel Mann, whom I had the pleasure of first hearing almost three years ago at an independent artist convention. Mann came to Los Angeles to score films and write music for TV after graduating with a music composition degree from the University of Pennsylvania. He's been so successful at it that he's built a reputation as the "song guy," writing on a regular basis for Fox's *Arrested Development* with composer David Schwartz.

Mann values the experience. "Movie and TV exposure cannot be underestimated," he said. "I've had a fair amount. Oftentimes the creator of *Arrested Development*, Mitch Hurwitz, will ask me to write a song for a specific scene in the show. The show is really funny, so it's a real pleasure to work on it."

Mann is currently in his second season with the show. He also co-

wrote a song with Deborah Lurie, "Remember," which appeared in MGM's *Sleepover*, and has licensed several tracks to MTV.

But his passion is writing and performing his songs in front of fans. He plays out in Los Angeles frequently with his trio — Mann on piano, Adam Marcello on drums and Carson Cohen on bass — and has built a healthy fan base the old-fashioned way: through word of mouth and perseverance.

Mann has sold thousands of CDs at shows and out of the trunk of his car, as well as through CD Baby, iTunes and other online music stores. His sales on iTunes have doubled week to week for the last few months. In addition, his live shows are well attended and usually turn into gigantic sing-alongs. When I saw Mann open for Jamie Cullum, the entire house sang "Go Up to Go Down" in unison.



LEARNING WHILE LUNCHING John Tesh recently hosted *Intelligence for Your Lunch*, a listener event with affiliate KMZQ (Lite 100.5)/Las Vegas. Seen here (l-r) are TeshMedia Director/Marketing Gib Gerard, Tesh bandmember Christine Miller, Tesh, KMZQ PD Craig Powers and GM Tom Humm, TeshMedia Exec. Producer Betsy Chase and KMZQ OM Christina Rasch.

Songwriting Competition in 2003 and beat out over 32,000 entries from all over the world to take the grand prize. A new version of "Lighted Up" will appear on his forthcoming release, *Gabriel Mann*, which is due in the spring of 2005.

I had the honor of listening to the unmastered CD, and, not surprisingly, I enjoyed what I heard immensely.

The album features several songs that have all the makings of radio hits. Mann has a gift for writing songs with flowing melodies that build into huge, epic, hooky choruses. "Go Up to Go Down" is a mesmerizing song and certainly a crowd favorite. The lyrics are

introspective and lie comfortably within the melancholic melody, and it really is a powerful sight to see a packed house belting out the chorus.

In "The Way You Lie" Mann tells a story about someone who is in total

denial while things are falling apart around her. The song features beautiful harmonies by Garrison Starr, who had a track at Hot AC several years ago called "Superhero."

But the most infectious gem on the CD is "Someone Else for One Day," which is about the fantasy of living someone else's life for a change of scenery. Mann's vocals are full of emotion and take the listener on the same ride. I'm predicting we'll see "Someone Else for One Day" on the chart next year.

The Mann Plan

BigHelium is taking an atypical approach to marketing Mann. The album will be finished in January and followed by publicity, touring and creative marketing. The single will hit radio in late spring with a buzz already behind it, I'm sure.

Ratner revealed the reasoning behind this approach: "Most record companies will put a single out to promote the release of an album, but the world has changed. You can't hang radio listeners out there. If they hear something they like, they look for it."

"Listeners have the ability to look

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Marc Ratner

for it instantly online, whether at iTunes or Amazon or whatever. If it's not available, you've lost the promotional impact. So you'll see the album before the single, and by the time we come to radio with Gabriel Mann, there will be a lot of reasons to play the record."

It'll be a busy 2005 for bigHelium and Mann as they do the setup for radio. Mann is actually a fan of the medium, and, without any prompting from Ratner, he began to tell me what radio stations he listens to, saying, "I listen to four stations in Los Angeles: NPR for a break from music and for *Morning Becomes Eclectic*; KYSR [Star 98.7] because I like to hear what America is listening to; KDLA for the raw, independent music; and KROQ because I like to rock. Since I play the piano, I don't get to rock as hard, although I do rock."

Mann then surprised me and Ratner when he added, "I occasionally listen to [KOST's] *Love Songs on the Coast* because I like when they play the duets from the early '80s, like Kenny Rogers and Dolly Parton's 'Islands in the Stream.' They are great, classic songs."

Perhaps next year Mann will hear his music on stations like Star 98.7.

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"When the audience knows the music, that's the best part," Mann said. "My music is melodic and easy to sing along to, so I love it when people sing along. It's the greatest thing in the world, and it makes doing your job a lot easier and more fun, because everyone is with you."

An Early Listen

I often describe Mann's music as Maroon 5 meets Steve Winwood. And if you like Bruce Hornsby, there's a little bit of him in there too. "My influences were singer-songwriters from the early or late '70s, like Elton John, Steve Winwood and Billy Joel," Mann said.

"I also feel a real kinship with The Police, because they were also a trio, and because whenever they performed — live or on video — they were genuinely having a great time. Even though they were putting out meaningful and powerful music, they didn't take themselves too seriously, and we don't either. I'm not a crazy, brooding hermit artist; I'm just a dude who likes to hang out."

One of my favorite songs by Mann, "Lighted Up," was entered in the USA