

## Selected Snailhouse Press

Lies on the Prize is the best representation of Feuerstack's songwriting gifts. He composes slyly earnest lyrics, where sincere romanticism mingles effectively with playful black humour, and he marries these to unique soundtracks on what is ultimately an intricate guitar/voice record.

- from a feature in *Eye Weekly*, by Vish Khanna, July 2008.

Mike Feuerstack is the type of songwriter whose gentle lullabies hold hooks so subtle and layered they almost seem to hit and stick by osmosis.

- From a review of *The Silence Show* in *FFWD Weekly* (Calgary), by Mark Hamilton, August 2005.

Avec *Lies on the Prize*, Feuerstack accomplit un de ses plus beaux disques à ce jour avec un album oscillant entre la pop, le folk-rock et le country. Sa voix émotive et passionnée est réconfortante, douce et apaisante. Malgré le petit côté mélancolique de la musique country/folk, le jeune musicien respire l'amour et la joie de vivre.

- From a review of *Lies on the Prize* in *Emoragei*, by Jean-François Rioux, January 2009.

The lyrics on their own are lovely but they attain sublime status due to how the music envelops and caresses them, framing them perfectly. On "Fire Alarm," the lyric "Don't be afraid/You've got your youth, though that will fade/Does it keep us safe from harm if the kettle whistles along with the fire alarm?" is melancholy enough but add in the weeping strings, the plaintive guitar and Feuerstack's pining voice and you've got perfection. Forget lies, the hidden truth makes this music the real winner.

- from a review of *Lies on the Prize* in *Exclaim Magazine*, By Chris Whibbs, September 2008.

The impeccable songcraft, tender lyrical bent and tight guitar work remain, but what separates this record from previous Snailhouse efforts is its pop propulsion...Steering clear of any arena bluster or faddish gimmicks, Feuerstack finds a stealthy way to give 'er like a cream-of-the-crop singer-songwriter. His pretty and poignant songs about the (somewhat) simple things—love, homesickness, the sun—flow with ease, bolstered by the subtlest of strings and horns and keys.

- From a review of *Lies on the Prize* in *Montreal Mirror*, by Lorraine Carpenter, July 2008.

If there's anyone who deserves attention from the music masses, it's veteran Canadian guitarist Michael Feuerstack. ... While this disc is great for any occasion, it should find a welcoming home at the country's cottages this summer.

- from a review of *Lies On The Prize* in *Now Magazine*, by Bryan Borzykowski, July 2008

In many ways, though, Feuerstack lives in the songs of Snailhouse. Songs that detail life's failing and triumphs in the most delightful way. Songs that reflect the ever-evolving project of a kind, gentle and funny artist not content to play it safe.

- from a feature in *Ottawa Sun*, by Allan Wigney, August 2008.

**Feature:**  
***NightLife Magazine***  
**By Michael Barclay**  
**Dec 31, 2008**

Mike Feuerstack is an MVP of the Montreal scene, and yet for whatever reason can't seem to catch a break with his solo material, which he's been recording for 15 years under the name Snailhouse. He's a member of Bell Orchestre (playing the Hillside Inside show next month), is in the touring band for country-rock songstress Angela Desveaux, has a side project with Bry Webb of the Constantines, and still gets together with his influential, Juno-winning '90s band the Wooden Stars on occasion.

All that activity has obviously sent him into a creative overdrive, because his sixth album is evidence that Feuerstack is finally reaching the prime of his career: everything here -- his singing, his songwriting and his sense of arrangements -- is far and above superior not only to his own discography, but to that of most of his peers in 2008, including his disciples such as The Acorn and hotly tipped Toronto act Bruce Peninsula.

He gets plenty of help here, primarily from old friend and Arcade Fire drummer Jeremy Gara, who produced the album. Desveaux and members of Bell Orchestre also drop by. But the focus is always squarely on Feuerstack's increasingly direct melodies, which position him to challenge some of the finest songsmiths this country has to offer -- including the likes of Joel Plaskett, Ron Sexsmith and other CBC staples.

Feuerstack's previous work as Snailhouse had him pegged as a bit of a sad sack; while *Lies on the Prize* certainly has its melancholy moments, it's also a mature work that successfully balances his earlier prog influences with more straightforward singer/songwriter fare, always with subtle turns that keep it one step removed from conventional clichés. Feuerstack has the age and experience to write with a mature voice where pessimism and harsh realism never surrender entirely to cynicism; he might live in a world where "they'll only hear you when you lie," but that's not enough reason to believe that "all in good time you'll wake up feeling fine."

These lucky 13 tracks comprise the most underrated Canadian album of 2008, which was released last June to little fanfare. With an album this timeless, however, it's never too late to catch up.

**Review of *Lies on the Prize***

***The Star***

**By Ben Rayner**

**Aug 05, 2008**

If Mike Feuerstack has had anything stacked against him – other than being tucked away out of sight in Ottawa – during the nearly 15 years he's been making Snailhouse records, it's that his songs were often too intimate, too naked to invite the broader audience he deserves in.

*Lies on the Prize*, the sometime Wooden Stars guitarist's sixth Snailhouse album, might finally be the one to turn a few more ears in Feuerstack's direction. Bigger and brighter than anything he's done before, the disc puts an unexpected pop oomph behind Feuerstack's typically incisive songwriting without sacrificing the up-close-and-personal qualities and subtle, experimental leanings of his quieter, folkier material. Indeed, the most striking tune here might be the more familiarly Snailhouse-ian "Tone Deaf Birds," a shivery, two-minute acoustic lullaby dappled with Pietro Amato's French horn and hung on vague, but evocative verses like: "It's cold at night / You sing yourself to sleep that's why you wake up tired / Poor me, they sell me things I don't really need / But tone deaf birds sing anyway."

Still, *Lies on the Prize* shines equally on the "up" – in tempo and instrumental tone, if not necessarily in subject matter – end of the spectrum. The irresistible Velvets chug and jangle of "(Not) Superstitious" gives way to the catchiest chorus Feuerstack's ever put to tape, while "Salvation Army" is a rollicking waltz graced gorgeously with the hurtin' harmonies of Angela Desveaux.

As befits such a talented and unpredictable guitarist, Feuerstack – who played most of the instruments himself, with drum, keyboard, recording and mixing assistance from Arcade Fire's Jeremy Gara – doesn't use going a bit "pop" as an excuse to simplify his arrangements or the instrumentation. Nearly every tune has a few weird angles and shady corners to ponder in the weeks and, in all likelihood, months to come. Now more than ever, Snailhouse would appear ready for its spotlight. (3.5/4)