



Album review by Andy Osborn

August Wells: Madness is the Mercy

Meaning to the madness

August Wells are New York based duo Ken Griffin, formerly of Dublin band Rollerskate Skinny, and pianist John Rauchenberger.

Their second album *Madness is the Mercy* delves uncomfortably into a mid-life period soaked in regret, resignation and remorse. Here, time has all but ended, and opportunity has long since left the building. Surprisingly, the results are as uplifting as they are delightfully bleak; with light, sparse and melodic arrangements anchored by the burden of Griffin's reflections and life experience.

The opening track 'Here in the Wild' sets out a winning formula: Rauchenberger's minimalist piano accompanied by the strings and horns which feed off Griffin's scant guitar and dark vocals: "*People like us they don't live anymore,*" laments the baritone Griffin. Comparisons with Nick Cave and Scott Walker are hard to shake.

The depths of Griffin's self-reflections peak on 'She Was a Question': "*One day you wake up as the man that you are, and not as the one you thought you'd become,*" sings Griffin, as he lays bare the disappointment of self and relationships.

Standout track 'Daddy' lounges in whimsical MOR and Sinatra-esque territory to create a bogus gloss, one purposely at odds with the song's painful subtext: "*Dragged a heavy chain across so many good people's lives. Help me, daddy help me, you're the only one who's left, who can invite me home,*" sings Griffin. Is it confessional? Who knows?

On 'Crazy, Crazy, Crazy' Griffin sings: "*I miss kissing life, good morning and good night.*" Long may he continue to skilfully document it. 9/10