

Richie Cunning – Big Deal (LP)

Available September 1, 2022

Every city has its local legends; an artist, athlete, or singer who is unilaterally loved in their hometown but is a little bit of an unknown quantity a few cities away. For people who know and love San Francisco, it can feel like half the people you know and read about fit this description. And while we cherish these individuals as *our own*, when the rest of world catches on to one of our best secrets, the entire community around them has something extra special to celebrate.

If you're a fan of Frisco native, vocalist and producer **Richie Cunning**, it might be hard to believe it's been more than ten years since he released his celebrated *Night Train* LP. A constant presence on stage at top-flight rap events, collaborative releases with close affiliates **Rec League** and a traceable yet graceful evolution documented through well-timed singles and EPs have kept his (somewhat rabid) listeners satiated while awaiting his next full-length release.

Rest assured, from the very onset of *Big Deal*, we can all be glad we waited. And unsurprisingly, Richie has created another fully-contained and functional world to temporarily house all fans and friends in need of shelter, not the torchlit tunnels of *Night Train*, but a smokey West-Coast Vegas-style ballroom event, fit for Sammy, Frank, Dean and the gang.

If you assumed a smooth character like our Rico could just naturally come up with a whole new "Lounge Legacy Act" boom-bap sound just in time to return to the public eye, you wouldn't be too far off. But to hear Richie tell it, he spent years studying lounge, easy-listening and Rat Pack-style crooning before fully embracing this particular bent. That doesn't sound like a particularly terrible research job, but it seems to have really paid dividends, and while every song on *Big Deal* feels pretty unique in its own right, the full project plays like one intimate but raucous evening, and Richie switches speeds flawlessly throughout. He's got drinks, bubbly conversation, flirtatious banter, a few loose confessions to make, and more drinks coming. The jovial atmosphere here is even more impressive considering this is a one-man party, as Richie handles all production and vocal duties, even flexing a singing voice that should make his lounge-era forbearers proud. His ear has always been super solid but on tracks like "Salutations" and "Top It Off" it feels like every creative risk paid off. Party planning is another one of Mr. Cunning's lesser-known skills, and *Big Deal* is one of those celebrations that seems to have come together perfectly.

We're all in an odd place right now and the music industry seems to be searching for answers, with unpredictable results. Meanwhile, like a drunk singer in and out of the spotlight, San Francisco's hip-hop scene always feels like it's just inches away from being in the public eye. Richie Cunning has his name back up in lights again and it can't be a coincidence; *The City in the Fog* is about to finally get the shine it deserves.

Big Deal is out everywhere **September 1, 2022**.



- Studio Don for Zero Data