

Mark Cameron - Playing Rough (2016)

Wpisany przez bluesever
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1 *Doctor In The House* 2 *Somewhere Down The Line* 3 *Almost* 4 *Rusty Old Model* 5 *Bluesmans Lullaby* 6 *Morning After* 7 *Done Me Wrong* 8 *Together* 9 *Hammered By The Blues* 10 *Playing Rough* 11 *Close My Eyes* 12 *Borrowed Time* Mark Cameron - vocals, guitar Rick Miller - harmonica, vocals Scott Lundberg - bass, vocals Dan Schroeder - drums Sheri Cameron - saxophone, flute, percussion

Veteran Southern Minnesota-based singer/songwriter/guitarist Mark Cameron follows up on his well-received 2014 release, *One Way Ride To The Blues*, with this disc, which takes his recording catalog to a new level as it guarantees to keep you moving on the dance floor.

Possessing a clear, powerful voice and excellent six-string chops, Cameron cut his teeth in the folk-rock scene during the '70s through the '90s, during which he released five studio albums. He's been a consistent top finisher in competitions since making the switch to the blues and, like *Playing Rough* clearly demonstrates, his songwriting talents are top notch. Since this CD – the fourth in his blues arsenal — was released in early January, it's been rising steadily on charts and radio playlists.

His tight, four-piece backing unit consists of Bill "Killer" Keyes on harp, Scott Lundberg on bass and Dan Schroeder on drums. The band delivers a unique sound thanks to the presence of Mark's wife, Sheri, who contributes flute throughout, adding an instrument that's virtually disappeared from rock and blues after being a mainstay in popular music of the '60s. They're augmented by backup singers Sara Renner and Tonia Hughes, washboard and bones player Scott Sansby and keyboard player Jason Craft. Percussionist Greg Schutte and bassist Nick Salisbury, who engineered, produced and mixed the disc, also make guest appearances.

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A brief guitar lick kicks off “Doctor In The House,” a moderately paced boogie that sings about how “the blues is goin’ around.” The song’s brief, but gives Keyes and Cameron plenty of space to make their intentions clear during solos. “Somewhere Down The Line” is a guitar-driven funk atop a medium shuffle beat that tells the story of waiting for revenge after having been sold out by someone who billed himself as “lightning in a jar.”

The slow Memphis-style blues “Almost” follows. It’s a dance-floor grinder, a love song full of regret, as it details a relationship that simply doesn’t work. Every time the singer gets close, the woman runs away. Cameron’s slide work delivers a Delta feel for a paeon to a “Rusty Old Model T” before the sweetest tune on the disc, the seven-minute “Bluesmans Lullaby,” an honest look at both positives and negatives in a musician’s life. Sheri’s flute and Keyes’ harp add a sweet touch to the bittersweet mix, which builds in intensity as it progresses. It was written as a tribute to B.B. King.

The feel continues for the opening of “Morning After,” but the song quickly evolves into a straight-ahead blues as it describes a woman who obviously has another man on the line and a feeling that lasts for days rather than a few hours. Cameron’s mid-tune solo, which alternates single-note runs with chords, is stellar. Like the title states, “Done Me Wrong” delivers another message of abandonment with a stripped down Hill Country feel before the rock/gospel flavored “Together,” which is enhanced by the backup singers.

The straight-ahead 12-bar “Hammered By The Blues” gives Keyes plenty of space to stretch out as Cameron sings about the aftermath of unknowingly hooking up with a woman who has a jealous and angry man at home. The title cut, “Playing Rough,” picks up the tempo as it speaks of another bad relationship before Mark goes a capella for “Close My Eyes,” a modern-day field holler. The slow blues ballad “Borrowed Time” concludes the set as it describes a woman who changes lovers frequently, but can’t seem to get the old one out of her life.

Available through CDBaby, this album delivers completely original material throughout. Even the abundant relationship material has a fresh feel. If you’re tired of the old one-four-five, this one’s for you. ---Marty Gunther, bluesblastmagazine.com

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