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Blues, as a musical expression of the human heart, comes in many shades. Sure, it can represent an anguished declaration of despair, the cry of a soul in torment... but blues can just as easily be an exercise in exuberance, too. And when it comes to blues from the joyous end of the spectrum, it doesn't get much better than Kevin Mark's "Cuttin Loose." Mark, who's shown an increasingly sure hand with each release, here reveals a fully-realized talent and a thoroughly entertaining approach. Mark's music isn't meant to plumb the darkness; it's as celebratory as it gets, mining the timeless territory when a hot horn section was just as important as fleet fretwork, much in the vein of Colin James' Little Big Band outings. Mark, however, wrote most of the material here, with help from long-time associates Rob Marcheterre (drums) and Costas Zafiroopoulos (bass) helping out on a few. It's a testament to his compositional abilities that one can't tell the originals from the covers without liner notes; he's adding to - rather than simply covering - the classics, and some of the tunes here could well become standards of tomorrow. Mark kickstarts the party with a blast via "Goin' To Vegas," a rollicking romp that could easily have come from the Leiber and Stoller songbook. It's original, but Mark does indeed dip into the L&S canon a little further down the playlist with the relatively rare "One Bad Stud," treated with appropriate irreverence and energy. "If Your Phone Don't Ring" jumps thanks to a big beat and great horn work, with guest vocalist Tina Dee doing duet duties to give the tune a Buddy and Ella Johnson feel. Other guests include Michael Fonfara, surely Canada's finest (and arguably busiest) ringer when it comes to keyboard contributions. The title tune give Mark a chance to stretch out with some fine, B.B. King-inspired licks that show he's also learned Mr. King's lessons regarding restraint - while Mark can definitely dazzle, he never overplays, instead taking the time to make every note count. Covers include "Seven Nights To Rock" (first made famous by Moon Mullican) and a killer take on "Saint James Infirmary" that would sound right at home on Bourbon Street, complete with Dixieland-style outro. Elsewhere Mark and company may well have crafted the instrumental of the year with "You're Fat," featuring an insanely catchy riff that just won't let go, though "King Albert" (guess who it's a tribute to!) is just as accomplished and shows Mark the equal of any when it comes to serious string-bending. Throughout, Mark's vocals are confident and assured; he's blessed with a big voice, at times reminiscent of the classic blues shouters who could fill halls without trying, allowing him to deliver lines with commanding authority without the need to reach for the rafters. His band is absolutely top-notch, playing with just the right combination of crisp precision and relaxed abandon. And above all, the disc swings from beginning to end. A stellar outing all the way!

Mike Graham, Ottawa Blues Society

If it's 'boogie' and high-tempo rocking blues that you like, then 'Cuttin' Loose' is for you! If there ever was a 'party CD', this is it! Kevin Mark produced all tracks and wrote/co-wrote 11 of the 14 numbers. Kevin was born and raised in Montreal and began his musical career at the age of 12 when he received a saxophone as a gift. In 2001, Kevin and his band were presented with the 'Best New Artist' award at the Maple Blues Awards. Kevin's style has evolved from the influences of legendary artists such as T-Bone Walker, B.B. King, Albert King, Albert Collins and Luther Allison. This production takes you from the West Coast to Chicago with a smattering of New Orleans! 'Cuttin' Loose' features 14 tracks and opens with two pounding rockers 'Goin' To Vegas' and 'Let's Party All Night'. Both tracks set the tone for this high-octane CD. Kevin shows his versatility when he slows it down to a B.B. King-style number with the title track and then proceeds to more up-tempo Chicago-style tracks. Track 6, 'Pretty Little Thing' is a 50s-ish rock tune that again illustrates the versatility of Kevin and his band. Two feature tracks are the Glover/Innis classic 'Seven Nights To Rock' and the Leiber/Stoller jive classic entitled 'One Bad Stud'. On the last track, Kevin performs a fine arrangement of the traditional 'St. James Infirmary'. I really enjoyed listening to this CD over and over again!

Duke Eatmon, CBC Radio One (Canada)

Montreal bluesman Kevin Mark's latest album "Cuttin' Loose" pays homage to the two "royal Alberts" of the blues, Albert King and Collins with a new album that chooses to use new material instead of the tired tribute/covers concept. The results are great with rich horn-powered blues that harks back to King's "Born Under A Bad Sign" days. Collins is represented with sharp snapping guitar riffs. Cuts like "You Bust Me" and the instrumental "King Albert" make the blues sound refreshing and exciting again. Great summertime backyard bar-b-que album!

Delta Man, Radio Baker Street (France)

Quelle fougue dès l'entame de l'album ! Tout commence par un Goin' To Vegas, habillé de rock sauce fifties. "Cuttin' Loose", est le nouvel essai réussi du Canadien Kevin Mark. Les parfums rock 'n roll "old school" et swing qui se dégagent de chacun des titres ne sont qu'invitation à danser. D'ailleurs le titre "It's Saturday Nite" n'est sûrement pas étranger à l'affaire ! Jouer sa musique fort parce qu'on est samedi soir, se délecter des sept nuits qu'offre chaque semaine pour flirter avec une fille différente sur "Seven Nights To Rock" ou conjurer le mauvais sort sur "Cuttin' Loose", tout n'est que festivités proposées par l'auteur. De la note swing de T-Bone Walker à la patte Blues d'Albert King, Kevin Mark propose même deux instrumentaux, dont un qui rappellera probablement d'excellents souvenirs aux adeptes du Roi Albert ! Parfois le blues fait une incursion au milieu de ce grand déballage de sueur, histoire de nous rappeler que c'est dans les bars enfumés de volutes bleues que Kevin Mark a jeté ses premières notes de guitare. L'album se clôture sur le fameux "St. James Infirmary", dans une relecture d'anthologie, tant les trottoirs de Royal et Bourbon Street semblent avoir pris possession de votre âme pendant sept belles minutes. Un Must !!! Faire la nique à la loose, que voilà une belle prophétie orchestrée par un Kevin Mark en pleine ascension discographique ! Gageons que ce 2° album sortant 3 ans après un "Rolling The Dice" déjà prometteur, ne soit que le début d'une belle et grande aventure...

John Valenteyn, Maple Blues Magazine (Toronto)

Montreal's Kevin Mark was the 2001 Toronto Blues Society National Talent Search winner (he has won many more awards since then). This new CD, titled "Cuttin' Loose" features some vintage fifties-style blues and rock 'n roll, performed with Mark's usual élan – a worthy successor to the award-winning "Rolling the Dice". All save three of the songs are original compositions by Mark but any fan of this music will recognize the styles across the fourteen songs. So successful is he that "Seven Nights to Rock" (recorded by Moon Mullican, 1959) slips by without notice. Mark's vocals and guitar are perfect, the guitar especially so on "You Bust Me". Michael Fonfara shines on keys throughout and the horn section deserves special mention, with three saxes (two tenor, one baritone), trumpet and trombone completely at home in this music. The CD ends with two songs that do deserve singling out: "King Albert" is a stylish tribute to the Flying V master and the seven-minute "St. James Infirmary" has to be heard to be believed - Mark outdoes himself here. A last word about the sound: he sent the master tapes to West-Coast mixing engineer, Jerry Hall – it was worth it!

Dean Cottrill, Hour Magazine (Montreal)

Sporting a voice not unlike Kim Wilson, and with Jack de Keyser as producer, Kevin Mark's "Rolling The Dice" goes for the throat with a lively collection of 11 upbeat blues originals out of 13 tracks. Mark also slings a mean DeArmond archtop above Costa Zafirooulos's doghouse and Rob "Big Daddy" Marcheterre's kit. Still more, there's a trio of reeds and the piano of Downchild's Michael Fonfara to fill up the pockets. Good line: "Ain't got no money for my old age pension/ I'm so broke I can't even pay attention," from I'm So Broke, one of Mark's double shuffles. The next track, Let's Do It Again, features guest vocalist Linda Fraraccio and the sax of Mario Allard. For a hefty cat, Kevin Mark knows how to keep it light and entertaining, and, let's face it, finding humour - whether it's on She's Murder, Bad Girl or You're So Mean - is a talent in itself.

Réjean Nadon, Magazine Le Net Blues (Montréal)

Kevin Mark a peut-être perdu 30 kilos, mais il n'a certainement pas perdu le Nord. Bien dans sa peau, il nous présente cet opus 3 à la fois convivial et festif qui marque la suite logique de l'artiste. Cet auteur compositeur interprète gagne l'affection d'un public qui s'agrandit année après année. "Cuttin' Loose" est pour moi le nouveau gâteau sortie du four. Plusieurs ingrédients, le swing, le blues, le rock 'n roll qui se suivent et se succèdent avec un arôme rétro. 11 des 14 pièces qu'il nous présente sont originales, cinq d'entre-elles sont co-écrites avec ses fidèles complices musiciens Rob "Big Daddy" Marcheterre et Costa Zafirooulos. L'album commence tout en puissance avec la pièce "Goin' To Vegas", un rock'n'roll d'enfer à la Chubby Checker muni d'une section cuivre qui donne le ton à cette production indépendante. On continue avec "Let's Party All Night", un swing original qui aurait bien glissé dans le film Pearl Harbour et sa musique d'époque. On fait aussi appel à une jolie recrue nommé Tina Dee. Une voix chaude qui donne la réplique à Kevin dans la pièce "If Your Phone Don't Ring". Tina Dee, un nom à retenir ! Et ça continue de plus bel avec la pièce-titre "Cuttin' Loose", un Blues langoureux qui nous laisse redécouvrir un Kevin Mark performeur au vocal et à la guitare. À écouter dans l'tapis; frissons garantis... Une autre pièce originale avec "Pretty Little Thing", un shuffle blues dans la pure tradition et "It's Saturday Nite", une musique festive co-écrite avec Costa Zafirooulos. On revisite également quelques pièces dont "Seven Nights To Rock", "One Bad Stud" et l'excellente pièce "St. James Infirmary", une musique louisianaise badigeonnée à la sauce Kevin Mark. Enregistré à Montréal au studio Hideaway de Kevin, l'album a été figolé au studio de Jerry Hall en Californie. En terminant, j'aimerais ajouter qu'une telle production est tout à l'honneur de cet artiste acharné de chez nous. Une chaleur artistique qui nous attrape sur disque, mais aussi sur une scène, que je place dans les meilleurs top dix à voir et entendre. "Cuttin' Loose", album bluezy d'ici, généreux, idéal pour vos party BBQ cet été. À vous procurer absolument...

Tim Holek, Southwest Blues Magazine (U.S.A.)

With a full-bodied guitar and a considerable voice, Kevin Mark is a big man with a big sound. He requires a lot of band behind his powerful guitar. Seven musicians support him on his 50-minute release, "Rolling The Dice". The three-man horn section seem to be having a blast, and they do more than simply provide fills. Throughout, Michael Fonfara's skillful keyboards tingle away in the background courtesy of Jack de Keyser's adept production. Like most of the songs, "So Blue Without You" bops and swings with lively horns and expressive piano. "Mean Mistreater" comes with a hint of rhythm from "Mustang Sally." "Big Blue Cadillac" combines the past times of music, cars, and sex. The lyrics of "I'm So Broke" contain many clichés, yet they are entertaining. You will enjoy this party song about a sad situation. The horns acquire Memphis soul on "Searching For My Baby." The song is one of the album's highlights, as is Frankie Thiffault's vibrant sax solo. Laurier Gagnon adds Hound Dog Taylor-like slide guitar to "You're So Mean." These 13 songs (including 11 originals) contain material to get you out on the dance floor. Ballroom dancers will especially enjoy "I Want You To Be My Baby." Although swing music (like any genre) has its limitations, the powerful tone of "Rolling The Dice" is sure to establish Kevin Mark as a triple threat (singer, songwriter, guitar player) on the Canadian blues music scene.