



MARK PETERSEN

SIDEWALK RAIN

When the storm comes, do you duck for cover or look for the beauty in the downpour? How long does it take to understand the rhythm of the rain, to smoothly navigate the “oil-black streets” with fearless abandon?

“It takes a long time to figure out the slipperiness of it,” says Mark Petersen, with a sly smile. The Vancouver musician, who has been polishing guitar licks and penning songs for two decades now, is referring to the five-finger finesse, the assured slide-and-glide of playing good blues. With his latest record, aptly named **SIDEWALK RAIN**, Mark feels he has finally tapped into a certain authenticity, a liquid quality in his music. “After twenty years, I feel way more comfortable and slippery, coming through this record. It’s more natural for me.”

By natural, he means embracing the greasy grooves that first ignited his musical imagination. While baritone sax was his first instrument, upon exiting his teens he gravitated to the guitar and soon discovered the appeal of hardcore blues from the likes of Stevie Ray Vaughan, Albert King, Muddy Waters, Hollywood Fats and Eric Clapton, to name a few. He spent much of his early twenties at Vancouver legendary blues bar, The Yale, learning from and jamming with local blues gurus Jack Lavin and Tim Hearsey. Here he earned the nickname “Fatneck” for the corpulent sounds he wreaked out of his thick-necked Gibson, weighted in equal measure by his throaty vocals. “I was the scrawny white guy from Lynn Valley with the baseball-bat necks,” he muses. “And I belt it.”

Mark’s impressive guitar skills and his foray into other musical genres found him in demand as a player, including touring North America with two of the hottest Canadian rock bands of the late ‘90s: Limblifter and Econoline Crush. Meanwhile, experiments in defining his own style prompted the formation of his first band, Threesixty, and a self-titled debut EP that brought deserved attention to his voice and songwriting skills, the lead track “The Leading Brand” garnering him second place in the CFOX Seeds contest and a best vocalist award. A few years down the road, newly divorced and emotionally burnt out but ready to push the envelope, he released **LOST AND FOUND**, a set of slick tunes that met at the intersection of blues rock and drum ‘n bass.

With **SIDEWALK RAIN**, Mark has come full circle and hit a new plateau. “I went through different pathways to come back to myself,” he says. Where his last record called for laptop wizardry and a full band on stage, **SIDEWALK RAIN**, recorded by John Raham at Afterlife Studios, is stripped back to elemental instrumentation and more classic sounds. Raw and raucous vocals over oily guitar, snappy skins, fat bass and woozy organ animate a set of alt-blues songs that cut to the heart of the matter. Sleazy opener “Poker, Wine and Women”, written for *Brief Encounters*, an interdisciplinary performance series that paired him with burlesque dancer Little Woo, is all raunch and tarty tongue-in-cheek. Funk meets lounge in songs like “Lost My Dame” and “Bonny Lass”, telling tales of cheatin’ gals and unrequited love, while “Poke Me Back” exploits social-media dating lingo. Things get a bit tropical, too-much-tequila in “Latin Cricket”, and the title track is a reflective walk through the “tell-tale beat” of a hard, exhilarating rain. You can hear the fat raindrops fall “down the awning past my weathervane” and the “concrete getting drowned” in this infectious song, a homage to Rain City. Mark, a Vancouver native and lover of all things slick and slippery, is proud to say he has never owned an umbrella. And there’s nothing greasier than blasting out the tail of the record with “Sweet 302”, an ode to the beloved 1969 Ford V8 engine that powers Mark’s van, an engine he helped install. “No computers! Just horses!” says Mark.

Forget the raincoat. **SIDEWALK RAIN** will drench you in heady, blissful blues.



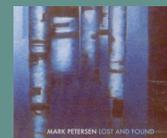
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DISCOGRAPHY



Threesixty
Independent, 1997

Mark Petersen’s debut album featuring Geoff Hicks on drums and Tino Zolfo on bass. Mark’s countless nights playing at The Yale and listening to a variety of different records came together on this straight-up blues rock record, which is reminiscent of The Black Crowes and Big Sugar. The lead track, ‘The Leading Brand’, garnered second place in the CFOX Seeds Contest and won best vocalist award.



Lost and Found
Independent, 2004

Mark’s sophomore album once again features Geoff Hicks on drums and adds newcomer, Brad Ferguson, on bass. ‘Lost and Found’ is a perfect mix of blues-rock and drum and bass, with programmed beats melding with bluesy guitar and vocals. With this album Mark Petersen took to the road, playing showcases at WCMA, NXNE and NMW.

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