

# MUSIC STREET JOURNAL

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## Interview with Mark Newman

Interview by Greg Olma

**Music Street Journal:** Your album Must Be A Pony has an old feel to it. Was this a conscious decision to give it a 70's sound?

**Mark Newman:** I wouldn't say it's conscious. My favorite bands were from that era as far as guitar playing - even the production. I like bands like Little Feat, Allman Brothers, and people in that genre.

**Music Street Journal:** Did you want to emulate that sound?

**Mark Newman:** Pretty much. I've always been attracted to that sound and I wanted to keep a lot of the rhythm tracks acoustic which a lot of times they did that back then also.

**Music Street Journal:** What is your songwriting process? Is it music first and then lyrics or do you wrote the story first and then put music to it?

**Mark Newman:** Yes. (Laughing) All of the above.

**Music Street Journal:** What made you choose the Bee Gees song "New York Mining Disaster, 1941" to cover?

**Mark Newman:** I've always loved the song. I was playing in an

acoustic club with a friend of mine. And this was right after 9/11. We had done that song a few times. We liked the song. This was maybe a week after 9/11. When we finished, some girl said “great choice.” I thought about it and went “you know, she’s right.” I didn’t want to try to release it right after 9/11. That would be in bad taste. I’ve always been attracted to the song. My co-producer, Keith Lentin, said in his very distinguished London accent “alright Newman. We’ll do it but we’re going to change the f\*\*king arrangement.” Like I said, I’ve always loved the song and just decided to give it a really eerie treatment.

**Music Street Journal:** Are there any plans to tour behind this record?

**Mark Newman:** I’m working on it now. I just played The Bitter End in New York, which is where I live. I’m playing a couple of gigs in Connecticut. We’re starting small from Boston to D.C.. I’m actually going out to Colorado to do a few gigs because they’re playing it on KDNK out there.

**Music Street Journal:** Do you feel that your style of music is making a comeback?

**Mark Newman:** I think it has been for some time. I think that people got, this is just my opinion of course, really tired of all the processing, all the loops, samples, and buzz-saw guitar sounds. I think that’s been going on for a while. I know here on FUV [WFUV Public Radio], you hear more of an organic approach to music; where you don’t hear a whole bed of distorted guitars for a person to sing over or to lay solos over. I’d say it’s been happening for a while.

**Music Street Journal:** I heard that you have some stories about your tours with Sam Moore from Sam and Dave. What is your favorite story?

**Mark Newman:** He’s just a really interesting character. We were at The Blue Note in Japan, in Tokyo. At that place, they feed you after the gig every night. It’s unbelievable how nice they were there. Sam would look over at my plate every night and say “hey Mark, what are you eating, tofu?” I’d say “yeah, you want to try some?” He would look at me and grimace and go “nah!” You know, as far as stories about Sam Moore, he’s just... The greatest thing about working with him is just he is in my monitor. That voice that was on “Soul Man.” He’s 71, I think, and he sings like he’s in his 20’s. Every night I have to pinch myself and say “I’m playing guitar on stage with Sam Moore.” One of the greatest things we did was “The Charlie Rose Show.” Sam Moore released a record that Randy Jackson

produced. It's one of those duet records. Sting was one of the people on the record and so was Travis Tritt. I did maybe 3 gigs with Travis Tritt. We did "The Charlie Rose Show" with Sting and that was an absolute thrill. As far as stories, it's not like he's some wild man. The guy I would have more stories about is Sam the Sham, who co-wrote one of the songs on my record. He's another guy who's close to 70, if he's not 70 yet, and he's an amazing character. I've known him for like 30 years. When I was a kid, I started playing guitar for him. I guess he couldn't afford an adult back then, I don't know. He really set me straight on a lot of things. I was just a really white sounding guitar player trying to get as many notes in as I could. And he would send me home and say "go listen to this Jimmy Reed record." He was great. It's been great working with both of them. A lot of times, I'll come back from a Sam Moore gig and I'll leave the next day to go on a Sam the Sham gig.

**Music Street Journal:** Sounds like they are keeping you busy.

**Mark Newman:** Yeah, pretty much. One of the road stories; my second gig with Sam Moore was in Barcelona. We couldn't get out of the airport. The gig was on a Friday and I had Saturday to get back to New York and get on a plane Sunday Morning to go to Naples, Florida with Sam the Sham. Somehow, I don't know how I made it, but I made soundcheck 10 minutes late at 1:00 pm on Sunday. I slept in an airport for 6 hours in Toronto. They routed my trip through 3 or 4 different airports but I got to Florida. I never even came back to New York in between gigs. I kept calling Sam from Europe going "I'm gonna be there." I had to rent a car. I had to fly into Miami and drive across "alligator alley" like 100 mph.

**Music Street Journal:** What was the last CD you purchased?

**Mark Newman:** The last CD I purchased was the new Beatles CD Love. The one that George Martin reconstructed and it has the intro from one song leading into another song. I just bought it recently.

**Music Street Journal:** What was the last concert you attended as a fan?

**Mark Newman:** Wait, I've got to think about that for a second. I know I've been out to see someone recently this year. The one that stands out in my

mind is Cream. I saw the Cream reunion.

**Music Street Journal:** Was that at Madison Square Garden?

**Mark Newman:** Yeah, I caught the last night.

**Music Street Journal:** What is your favorite Spinal Tap moment from your career?

**Mark Newman:** Actually it was with Sam the Sham. We were playing the Nassau Coliseum for a benefit. They are leading us through the dungeon there. We're walking through what seems like miles of passageways underneath the stage. All I kept thinking of was Spinal Tap. That's probably the closest one.

**Music Street Journal:** What's next for Mark Newman?

**Mark Newman:** Well, you asked about touring. That's what we're working on right now. So right now, I'm doing Connecticut. I'm flying out to Colorado in February. I'm hoping to play South By Southwest but that's still up in the air. Nobody knows that until the last minute. So the plans are to support the CD. I hope to go skiing when I'm in Colorado.

**Music Street Journal:** Any last word for your fans?

**Mark Newman:** Vote!

**Music Street Journal:** Vote?

**Mark Newman:** Vote. Yeah, I don't know if you watched the speech last night [*referring to the Presidential speech on 01/10/07*]. I don't know what your affiliation is but I would say "vote."

**Music Street Journal:** I think they already voted and it's changing.

**Mark Newman:** Yeah, it's changing slowly and unfortunately, Thomas Jefferson thought there should be a turnover in government every 20 years. But right now, the only way to do that is vote. As they say "think globally, act locally."