

January/February 2007



**MARK
NEWMAN**

Must Be A Pony

(Danal)

To the extent he's known, Mark

Newman's reputation rests on session man and sideman, and this solo effort makes up for some lost time—11 of the 14 tracks were self-penned. And there are damned few other musicians sharing recording time—just a little drums and harmony filling in here and there, and basically, the rest is Newman's memorable singing...and playing some form of guitar. That's just fine.

The opening track, "Dead Man's Shoes," like much of this album, has that swampy, greasy groove Lowell George carved so well, but Newman embraces blues and country influences, too, and offers a few jazzy numbers, including a version of the Bee Gees' "New York Mining Disaster, 1941."

Unadorned, straight-ahead new-blues numbers like "Hard In The Rain" features Newman on guitar and lists Sam "The Sham" Samudio on chorus and vocals, but if Sam sings more than a dozen words, total (including the last chorus title), I'll stand in the rain myself. The percussion, I believe, is Newman clapping in time, and that's it. Damned spare, but effective.

My two favorite cuts are "So, So Cynical," another bluesy romp and one of the more involved cuts (drums, organ, bass, harmony and a nasty piece of slide guitar), and the rhythm-driven "A Love in Vain," which features nice harmony by Naomi Margolin, and, though repetitive, is hard to sit still through.

I assume the title derives from an old joke about the exceptionally optimistic child who, finding himself in a pool full of horseshit, keeps diving to the bottom, confident "There must be a pony in here somewhere!" No horseshit here...but I can guarantee a pony or two.

—Suzanne Cadgène