

## Mp3 Mark Sebastian - Bleecker Street



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Pop, blues urban folk from the singer/songwriter who authored "Summer In The City" for his brother's band, the Lovin' Spoonful in his teens. Known as a gifted guitarist and singer. 13 MP3 Songs POP: Folkly Pop, BLUES: Urban Blues Details: MARK SEBASTIAN: DESPITE THE HEAT IT'LL BE ALL RIGHT! At a time when many teenage kids are more concerned with how to score a six-pack for the weekend (or getting the phone number of that cute girl in Geometry class), Mark Sebastian had written a song that shot straight to #1 on the national pop charts. It was 1966, and the AM radio was bumper-to-bumper with great, British Invasion-style rock 'n' roll by the Beatles, Stones, Kinks and Hermitsas well as the fresh-faced American bands already cooking up a native version of this magical hoodoo. All things seemed possible. Mark's big brother, John Sebastian, was right in the thick of things as the frontman for the Lovin' Spoonful, already permanent residents of the U.S. top ten with a series of 1965-66 smashes: "Do You Believe In Magic," "You Didn't Have To Be So Nice," "Daydream" and "Did You Ever Have To Make Up Your Mind?" When Mark played his song "Summer In The City" for his brother, a lightbulb went on over John's head. "The verses had references to stickball games and other symbols of urban summer," says Mark of his masterpiece in the making. "The chorus promised relief: 'But at night it's a different world/Go out and find a girl/Come on, come on and dance all night/Despite the heat it'll be all right.'" John thought the tune might prove worthy of inclusion on the band's next album HUMS OF THE LOVIN' SPOONFUL. "He replaced my verses, which were kind of lazy, with more upbeat ones that gave the song more punch," says Mark. The band's bassist, Steve Boone, contributed a quirky middle instrumental section, and by July the Lovin' Spoonful had its first, and only, number one hit in America. And Mark Sebastian had joined a rarified circle of songwriters who'd penned songs for the teen market while still in their teens. Growing up in New York City, the son of harmonica virtuoso John Sebastian,

Mark was surrounded by a diverse mlange of musical influences. Bluegrass, Delta Blues, Bossa Nova and Cuban rhythms all mingled in the air surrounding his family's Washington Square apartment. His father was regarded as the era's premier classical harmonicist, performing Bach, Mozart and other serious composers' works on records and in concerts around the world. Mark's mother, Jane Sebastian, managed Carnegie Hall, which provided him with even greater exposure to classical music. Mark led several bands in NYC and out on Long Island before settling into a regular spot as the in-house opener at famed Village nightspots the Gaslight and the Cafe Au Go-Go. There he shared bills with many folk and blues greats, including Judy Collins, Dave Van Ronk, Sonny Terry Brownie Mcgeeand a particular hero of his, Tim Hardin. Mark was first discovered as an artist by legendary Columbia Records producer John Hammond, a friend of the family since the days Mark's dad had played classical music on the harmonica at Cafe Society, a frequent haunt of jazz great Billie Holiday. Hammond, of course, was the man who'd signed Bob Dylan, and many others, including Bruce Springsteen, to the label. The Sebastian family's game plan, says Mark, was: "'When Mark gets ready we'll take him up to John Hammond.'" Mark recalls Hammond excitedly tossing his head around and blurting out "Yeah, Yeah," when he played tunes for him. When the folk scene waned in 1970, Mark traveled to Europe, where he performed to receptive audiences and became involved in the nascent electronic music movement, composing and recording with serious music composers in London and Rome. Returning to New York, Mark experienced a sea of change, heavily influenced by his longtime love of Brian Wilson's PET SOUNDS and Van Dyke Parks' SONG CYCLE. Though he'd been raised in the East Coast milieu of folk and blues, the lush melodies, inventive lyrics and glossy production techniques seemed to beckon him West. He had cut some demos with famed producer Gary Usher while still in New York and felt himself drawn inexorably towards the West Coast Sound. In Los Angeles, Mark performed at all the happening local venues the Troubadour, the Ash Grove, the Golden Bear and became friends and formed working relationships with two of his major inspirations: Brian Wilson and Van Dyke Parks. "In 1971, I was house-sitting for John at his Laurel Canyon place while he was out on the road, solo," says Mark. "The phone rings at 2:00 in the morning and it's Brian Wilson. He tells me he's just finished a song and wanted to hear how it would sound if John sang it. While we're chatting, Brian says, 'You know, you have a very similar voice. Why don't you come over?'" Mark grabbed his trusty 12-string and found his way up to Wilson's Bellagio Road house in Belair and met Brian, Marilyn and the girls. "This was when Brian had that white piano, the one with a very

interesting tuning," notes Mark. The pair began playing songs for each other. "It was amazing to hear Brian play in that setting. It was so soulful. It was like there was a little, old black man locked up inside this guy!" That late-night chance encounter led to several song collaborations between the two, then with Mark being hired as a 12-string guitarist (always his main axe) on a session Brian was producing for Terry Melcher and Bruce Johnston. Brian also generously found studio time for Mark in one of the Beach Boys' favorite rooms, the storied United Western, where engineer Chuck Britz held court. Although Brian lobbied diligently to get Mark signed to Warner Bros., a recording deal never quite materialized. Following up on experience he'd gleaned in New York while creating music for an alternative theater piece by Ellen Terry, Mark returned to composing music for the theater. He helped establish the West Coast satellite of New York's cutting-edge theater group, La Mama, thanks to being championed by its founder, Ellen Stewart. He also began acting in TV and film. In the '80s, Mark enjoyed a stint as a staff writer at Earth, Wind & Fire's publishing company, a gig which led to members of EW&F playing on many of his demos. Mark has spent much of the time since then sharing bills with old friends Van Dyke Parks, the Beach Boys, Laura Nyro, Doors guitarist Robbie Krieger and former Animals singer Eric Burdon. Mark Sebastian continues to roam from coast to coast, from the gritty, no-sleep streets of New York City to the foam-flecked, sun-drenched beaches of Southern California, creating music in the idioms of both coasts and still searching for that perfect wave. (Jud Cost) Sebastian is joined here by friends including Van Dyke Parks (Beach Boys collaborator), Jim Keltner (Beatles/Rolling Stones session drummer) and Fred Tackett (Little Feat guitarist). People who are interested in John Lee Hooker/The Lovin' Spoonful/Brian Wilson should consider this download.

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