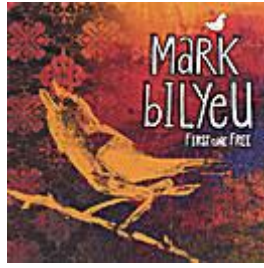


Mp3 Mark Bilyeu - First One Free



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The lead singer of Big Smith turns his attention to a folk-southern rock amalgam with the help of Mississippi musicians including Cary Hudson (Blue Mountain), Ted Gainey and Max Williams. 13 MP3 Songs ROCK: Folk Rock, ROCK: Americana Details: As part of the Ozarks family band Big Smith, Mark Bilyeu has served as de facto front man for the band of five cousins, although songwriting and lead vocal duties have always been divided between his brother and cousins. Big Smith has released 5 CDs: two studio recordings of original material, two live CDs (one in a church, the other in a bar) and a celebrated double CD for kids. Since 1996, Big Smith has toured extensively, exposing many thousands to Bilyeu's guitar playing, singing and songwriting. In January of 2005 Bilyeu began working on an album of his own. Recorded at Route 1 Recording in southern Mississippi, First One Free finds Bilyeu moving from the primarily acoustic hillbilly-bluegrass sound of Big Smith to something more akin to country-folk-rock (choose what ever hyphenated term you like). He enlists some well-known Mississippi musicians to back him up in the studio, including guitarist Cary Hudson (ex-Blue Mountain, now touring solo), drummer Ted Gainey (Blue Mountain, Kudzu Kings, Cary Hudson trio), and lap steel guitarist Max Williams (Taylor Grocery Band, Thacker Mountain Radio). Likewise the album reflects the distinctly southern country and blues influences of its players. To keep a taste of home, yet another of Bilyeu's cousins, Bill Thomas, plays bass guitar and sings backup on the record. The sessions were relaxed and easy. Bilyeu not only was able to stretch out on the electric guitar, trading licks with his mentor and guitar hero Hudson, but also explored new territory on the piano and Hammond organ. To recreate the sounds of First One Free on the road, Bilyeu has enlisted the talents of Thomas and two other musicians from his native Springfield, Missouri: keyboardist Joe Terry (Dave Alvin, Robbie Fulks, the Skeletons) and drummer John Anderson (Barefoot Revolution, the Osmonds). The versatility and virtuosity of these new musicians will

certainly push the music into new and exciting directions on stage.

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