

# Mp3 Mark Lonsway - Not Your Typical Cowboy



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A blend of country, rock and pop with big harmonies, colorful lyrics and a lot of heart. 10 MP3 Songs

COUNTRY: Country Rock, COUNTRY: Country Pop Details: "I just wanted to be like my Uncle Rick" Mark says of the reason he wanted to play music. "I don't even think I knew what a guitar was, but when I saw him play it, I thought, whatever that thing is, that's what I want." Fascinated by music at an early age, Mark has known that he wanted to be a musician since he can remember. Mark was born in the city of Fort Wayne, Indiana. While neither of his parents were particularly musical, there was always something different on the family record player; "Abba one minute, the Oak Ridge Boys the next". Oddly, a lot of his musical education happened in the 2-hour car ride between Fort Wayne and his father's hometown of Fostoria, Ohio. "There wasn't really anything else to do on a car trip back then except listen to the radio, so I just listened and soaked up what I could." At the age of 5, the family moved back to Fostoria, as Mark's father began a new job. Mark describes growing up in Fostoria as a fun time in his life. His father was one of six children, so with all of his aunts and uncles in town, "there was always something going on." But the best part for Mark was watching his uncle sing and play guitar. His uncle had created a "sound proof" room out of pillow cushions, so that he could record and make demos. Mark would stare in amazement at all of the equipment, and of course "the cool cushion wall". It wasn't long before he began asking Santa for a guitar for Christmas. While Mark's parents were concerned that his want of a guitar was merely a phase, they finally gave in and bought him his first guitar at the age of 10. A diligent student from the beginning, he would sit and practice at length, both reading music and improvising guitar progressions and lines. He even composed some songs; the fact that he only knew 2 chords was never an obstacle. Then, in 1985, Mark's Uncle Rick passed away from cancer, devastating the entire family. "My uncle's music was something that always drew the family together, even after his death." The family

created cassettes of his music and exchanged them with each other, a collection of about 10 cassettes of music. To help cope with his uncle's death, Mark sat down and began learning the cassettes by ear. "My uncle didn't read music. So, ironically, he was probably my best teacher because I was forced to learn to play songs without any sheet music or chord charts." A few years later, Mark got his first electric guitar, a Sears version of a Gibson Explorer that he bought from his cousin for \$40, a whole new world opened up. Now living in Liverpool, New York (a suburb of Syracuse), Mark began learning to play lead guitar. He took lessons from the instructors at the local guitar shop and quickly became their best student. An enthusiastic guitarist, he sometimes spent up to 7 hours a day practicing. This led to work with several area bands, including a job offer from former RCA artists, 805. But Mark knew that Syracuse wasn't the place for him and turned down the job. He began to study classical guitar, which eventually got him a scholarship to DePaul University, where he majored in Sound Recording Technology. Quite a "social student", Mark made many friends very fast, and was quickly drawn into the local college music scene. During this time, Mark put down the electric guitar, and picked up his uncle's acoustic and began to work on singing and writing. With one of his good friends, Mark wrote several songs and created the acoustic rock/folk band, Azure Bloom. Azure Bloom had immediate success on the small inner-city college campus, packing coffee shops and playing many campus functions, including a couple of national act openers for Blessid Union of Souls and Sister Soleil. Eventually, they signed with indie label, 312 Records, and recorded "Looking is Free". The band went on "mini-tours", playing around the country while also continuing their local Chicago shows. With the help of RCI Records (distribution), the record received airplay on several radio stations throughout the country. But eventually, Mark felt uneasy about the direction of the music; "it no longer felt like me, anymore". And it became evident that the members of the band didn't share the commitment level that Mark was looking for. Mark decided to pursue a solo project. With newfound freedom, Mark began to re-explore his passion for country music. "I just love the feeling and the stories in country music. There is a value system that you don't see in other styles of music that I appreciate and identify with." He began to co-write, most notably with Chicago singer/songwriter Dayna Malow, and Chicago producer, Chris Cash. An obstacle for many composers, Mark views co-writing as one of the most important things you can do as a writer. "You've got to learn to check your ego at the door and be open to other people's ideas." After working on Ms. Malow's debut record, Mark went on to play guitar and sing with her live band, taking on the role of musical director. "We've been very

fortunate to play as much as we have, including several opening slots for national country acts." In 2003, Mark began to collaborate with Nashville producer and keyboardist, Doug Sisemore. "Doug was definitely the missing piece to the puzzle. Not only is he a great writer, but he helped take all the songs for the new record and give them a little life of their own. It has been an amazing experience." With Doug, Mark recorded his first solo effort, "Not Your Typical Cowboy". Recorded at Tombstone Recording in Nashville, the new record features some of Nashville's best musicians and writers, as well as 6 songs written or co-written by Mark. "I know Uncle Rick would be proud. I got to work with so many talented musicians and engineers, I can't help but smile at the result . . . I hope you will too." -Performs as a member of Chicago USO troupe -National appearances: Billy Currington, Dierks Bentley, Blake Shelton, Mark Wills, Craig Morgan, Gary Allan, Rebecca Lynn Howard

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