

Let Yourself Go
Rip Cat Records



Does this sound familiar: really cool harmonica player/vocalist from the West Coast who channels those fun times of jumping, swinging romps, and deep Chicago blues? Well, that might almost seem like a dime-a-dozen nowadays, but seldom does it warrant the attention that a musician like Fresno's John Clifton does. He has been around; he is not a new performer dropped on us out of the blue. Since the 1980s he has been a strong member of the California blues community in the band he co-founded with his brother Bill, MoFo Party Band. They have toured across the country and into Europe numerous times. But Let Yourself Go is John Clifton's first attempt at a solo disc. Something he put a heavy amount of personal attention to, and it is in one word — dynamic!

It may not hurt to have a strong collection of amazing musicians on hand to help. People like Rusty Zinn, Kid Ramos, Marty Dotson, Mike Turturro, Bob Welsh, and Scott Abeyta to name a handful. But they're all just a little bit extra to the mix when you give the vocals and harmonica delivery brought by Clifton.

Clifton's songwriting takes a backseat to nobody. Intense at times and happy-go-lucky at others, John Clifton is a brilliant craftsman at putting together a song. Look at a number like "Garbage Day": "It's garbage day baby, woman I've just got to put you out / Put you out like a dog in the morning, put you out like the trash at night." Ouch! Now that's downright stating it bluntly that this relationship is over.

His delivery comes from all directions. "Every Time You Come Around" is reminiscent of classic 1960's R&B, while the instrumental "Beer Joint" takes on a standard Chicago blues approach, or "Big Man In A Little Town" could easily be taken for a composition from The Blasters' songbook. "Would You Understand" is a social commentary aimed to make you think whether or not you'd help somebody in more need than yourself. And "Dig Yourself" is a high-paced piano-harmonica interaction that from back in the day might've brought about images of Jerry Lee Lewis or perhaps Ray Charles doing "What'd I Say." That number cooks! And Bartek Szopinski is highlighted again on "Tell Me Baby" as Rusty Zinn and Bob Welsh sling mighty guitar licks back and forth and Clifton asks, "Tell me baby, where did you go last night, you smell like wine and you're a dreadful sight."

John Clifton may not be a name that instantly leaps to mind like many of the West Coast blues scene harmonica players, but maybe it's time it should be as he is right there with the best. And

Let Yourself Go is filled with all the heavy blowing and swinging playing that makes for the finest blues originating from this part of the country.

Total Time: 51:54

Let Yourself Go / The Gamble / Beer Joint / Would You Understand / Big John From Mississippi / Anytime Is Cool / Dig Yourself / Have Your Way Baby / Buddy Buddy Friends / Garbage Day / Tell Me Baby / Every Time You Come Around / Big Man In A Little