

AWEK

It's Rollin'

Mosaic Music

Take a blues band from Toulouse, France, fly them to Austin, Texas, pair them in the studio with Derek O'Brien, Kaz Kazanoff, and Fred Kaplan, serve 'em up a week of Texas bar-be-que, and Awek's *It Rollin'* is an energetic romp through the American music landscape. Awek's four man group features the skilled guitar, strong singing and competent song writing of Bernard Sellam paired with Stephane Bertolino's varied electric harp techniques.

On the opener, "Let's Rock," Sellam growls vocals, Bertolino blows and draws the reeds, Kazanoff propels his lusty tenor, and Kaplan pounds ivories in a shivery, 1950s-style rock 'n' roll. The drive through American music continues on "I Cry All Day Long," Awek's nostalgic, stroll-dance tune. When Awek plays the blues, it's a musical joy ride from Chicago to Texas. "Hush Your Mouth" simmers in a Jimmy Reed-style guitar and high-end acoustic blows. "Walter's Mood" is a rollicking instrumental tribute to Little Walter and his Aces' early Chess records. The lone cover, George "Harmonica" Smith's "Telephone Blues," focuses on Sellam's fat West coast guitar, Bertolino's chromatic, O'Brien's earthy Lone Star guitar, and Kaplan's veteran piano. The six minute, intimate musical conversation offers a fine example of letting the music breathe.

Kaplan trades keys for the richness of the B-3 on "Mind Your Step," layin' the foundation for Bertolino's jazz harmonica approaches and Sellam's Kenny Burrell guitar work. The band replicates T-Bone Walker's style and grace on "Queen Of The Night" and adds Kaz's ultra smooth tenor on "Play With Me," another tune with nostalgic ties to the early R&B of the 1940s.



Gritty Chicago harmonica, assertive, yet stylish guitaring, and polished originals which accurately cover American blues styles from Chicago's south side to gritty Texas shuffles to West coast jump make this record by the French band Awek is an international winner

-Art Tipaldi