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RJ Spangler's Blues Four - *You Know I Can't Refuse: The Bill Heid Sessions*

[Eastlawn Records](#)

11 tracks total time: 46:11

www.myspace.com/rjspangler

and

<http://detroitradiocompany.com>

For guest guitarist Johnnie Bassett:

www.mackavenue.com/sly_dog_records

Highly-accomplished pianist/vocalist and roots music

aficionado Bill Heid joins here with another highly accomplished musician and roots music enthusiast, Detroit drummer R.J. Spangler, along with the other members of Spangler's Blues Four, tenor saxophonist Keith Kaminski and upright bassist Pat Prouty, to deliver a CD deeply rooted in the blues and jazz styling of the 1930s and 1940s, a classic time in pop music when jazz-blues was integral to pop.

This CD, *You Know I Can't Refuse: The Bill Heid Sessions*, is further enhanced by brief but informative notes on Heid, Spangler, guest guitarist Johnnie Bassett, and the music that inspired them. Joining with Bassett and the Blues Four on instrumentation are trumpet-player James O'Donnell and baritone saxman Joshua James in a loving-tribute CD of ten "covers" and one Heid original, tack 6, the piano-with-drums boogie instrumental composed on the spot, "Boogie For Mr. B." "Covers" is deliberately put in quotation marks because the ten songs written by others that are performed here are not so much attempts to reproduce the originals as much as they are loving extensions of them, spirited recapturing brought home for modern listeners with all the power and soul of the originals.

These originals are all classics indeed. While eight of them are from the 1930s-1940s period, two are more contemporary blues of the 1950s: Sonny Boy Williamson II's "Ninety Nine," track 1, done as a piano-driven contemporary blues with Johnny Bassett on accompanying and solo guitar. "You Know I Can't Refuse," track 10, is a rumba that was originally recorded on Fortune records by the Five Dollars, where Bassett also played guitar. Like all the other tracks, it is essentially piano-driven, with the active support of Joshua James's baritone sax

and Keith Kaminski's tenor sax, along with Johnnie Bassett's guitar and elaborate Latin-style drumming by R.J. Spangler.

Contained on *You Know I Can't Refuse* are the venerable "I'm Gonna Move to the Outskirts of Town," track 9, and the Pete Johnson-Joe Turner classic, "Piney Brown Blues," track 7, along with two songs penned by Floyd Dixon, the delightfully double-entendre "Red Cherries," track 2, and the far more sexually direct "Baby Let's Go Down To The Woods," track 3. Count Basie Band veteran vocalist Jimmy Witherspoon contributes two songs to the CD as well, both tunes of hard times physically as well as economically, "Failing By Degrees," track 5, and "Times Are Getting Tougher Than Tough," track 8. The famed R&B/rock 'n' roll songwriting team of Jerry Lieber and Mike Stoller contribute another double-entendre, done nicely here as a stride piano blues with horns, track 4, "Too Much Jelly Roll." Rounding out the list is track 11, "Meet Me Baby," a masterful depiction in blues of a cheating woman, her husband finding out accidentally, and determined to make her lover pay for his indiscretion, with the lyrics by Rudy Green depicting all this in the graphic poetics that are the heart of the blues.

Bill Heid's vocals and piano are masterful, with Heid's virtuosity on the piano moving with ease from straightforward blues to direct jazz and jazz-inflected blues. He plays creative, elaborate solos throughout, as does tenor saxophonist Kaminski, whose playing ranges from straight-ahead blues/R&B to jazzy inflections, and whose mood created on his instrument ranges from exuberant to melancholy, as called for by the song. Joining Heid and Kaminski on powerful solos are guest guitarist Johnnie Bassett on three tracks, trumpeter James O'Donnell on one track, and bassist Pat Prouty on one track.

You Know I Can't Refuse: The Bill Heid Sessions, recorded in 2008 and 2009, is a vivid illustration of just how powerful those old blues styling of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s still remain, a welcome and elegant reminder of their everlasting, ever-rockin', significance brought up masterfully, accessibly, to now.

Reviewer George "Blues Fin Tuna" Fish hails from Indianapolis, Indiana, home of blues legends Yank Rachell and Leroy Carr. He has written a regular music column for several years. He wrote the liner notes for Yank Rachell's Delmark album, *Chicago Style*. He has been a blues and pop music contributor for the left-wing press as well, and has appeared in *Against the Current* and *Socialism and Democracy*.

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