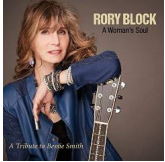


Rory Block – A Woman's Soul: A Tribute To Bessie Smith (2018)

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Rory Block – A Woman's Soul: A Tribute To Bessie Smith (2018)



1 Do Your Duty 4:19 2 Kitchen Man 4:01 3 Jazzbro Brown From Memphis Town 3:36 4 Gimme A Pigfoot And A Bottle Of Beer 3:47 5 Need A Little Sugar In My Bowl 3:20 6 I'm Down In The Dumps 6:09 7 Black Mountain 4:15 8 Weeping Willow Blues 4:11 9 On Revival Day 3:53 10 Empty Bed Blues 6:36 Rory Block - Primary Artist

Rory Block is a five-time Blues Award winner, and with albums like *A Woman of Soul*, it is easy to understand why. This is the first in a series of albums called "Power Women of the Blues." This one is a tribute to Bessie Smith.

The album contains well-known songs like "Do your Duty," "Gimme a Pigfoot and a Bottle of Beer," and "Need a Little Sugar in My Bowl." But Block also offers less familiar tunes like "Jazzbo Brown from Memphis Town," "I'm Down in the Dumps," and the rare, rousing gospel offering, "On Revival Day."

Then there is my favorite song on the album, the sexy, sassy "Kitchen Man." Who can resist lyrics like "I'm wild about his turnip tops, I like the way he warms my chops, and I can't do without my kitchen man"?

The selection is amazing enough, but what really inspires admiration is the realization that on this acoustic masterpiece, Block does everything herself. She plays all the guitars and bass. And she provides percussion, using, according to the press release, bongos, hat boxes, plastic storage tubs, oatmeal boxes and wooden spoons!

Block's voice does not have the power of Smith's, but she makes up for it by adding extra emotion. Take the aching sensuality of "Need a Little Sugar in My Bowl," the ragged edge of "Black Mountain" or the bittersweet blues of "Weeping Willow Blues" and the first Bessie Smith song this reporter ever heard, "Empty Bed Blues."

All this proves that Block, like Smith, is an important Power Woman of the Blues." She is a strong contender for the most influential acoustic artist of our time. Her Mentor series has highlighted many blues greats, like Son House and Bukka White. Now this series is set to do the same for the women. Get A Woman's Soul and join me in waiting eagerly to see what's next! ---makingascene.org

Blues guitarist and vocalist Rory Block serves up an inspired portrait of and homage to Bessie Smith on A Woman's Soul: A Tribute to Bessie Smith. Block has recorded several "tribute" albums, including Blues Walkin' Like a Man: A Tribute to Son House (Stoney Plain, 2008); Shake 'Em On Down: A Tribute to Mississippi Fred McDowell (Stoney Plain, 2011); I Belong to the Band: A Tribute to Rev. Gary Davis (Stoney Plain, 2012); Avalon: A Tribute to Mississippi John Hurt (Stoney Plain, 2013); Hard Luck Child: A Tribute to Skip James (Stoney Plain, 2014) and Keepin' Outta Trouble: A Tribute to Bukka White (Stoney Plain, 2016). Block's grasp on each artist's unique style is matched only by her innate ability to take this music and make it in her image. This is beyond impressive. It is stone-cold grace.

Bessie Smith is the first female artist in Block's series of tributes. Her homage is made that much more special by the fact that Block sings and plays all of the instruments on the decade's worth of intelligently selected songs from the Bessie Smith book. Block opts for Smith's sexier fare: "Do Your Duty," "Kitchen Man," "I Need a Little Sugar in my Bowl," and "Empty Bed Blues," and all are dispensed by Block with salacious finesse, a wink, and a wicked grin. Block's slide guitar is nothing short of phenomenal. Her playing on this present album recalls Ry Cooder's landmark recording Jazz (Warner Bros., 1977). "Empty Bed Blues" is the standout piece of the collection, Block hitting her stride, summoning all of humid carnality contained in these blues. Drink deep from this well. ---C. Michael Bailey, allaboutjazz.com

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