

Tim Gartland - If You Want a Good Woman (2016)

Written by bluesever

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01 – What The Blues Look Like 02 – Hour's Worth 03 – I Had It All 04 – If You Want A Good Woman 05 – I Come When You Call 06 – Eight Ball 07 – If That's What You Call Love 08 – Introduce Me To Your Hat 09 – Too Many Groceries 10 – Where's The Cure For you 11 – Willie That's Who 12 – Go West! Tim Gartland – harmonica, vocals Kevin McKendree – keyboards, producer Steve Mackey – bass Lynn Williams – drums + Tim Britt – guitar Tom West – keyboards Wendy Moten – vocals

Like your blues laid back and soulful Southern style? Like your harmonica smooth and old-school, devoid of overblows and pyrotechnics? Like your tunes simple and deep? Then this CD's right for you.

Tim Gartland fell in love with the blues after seeing Muddy Waters in concert near his home in Warren, Ohio, when he was just 14. Born into a large musical family, he gravitated to the harmonica early. Three brothers were guitar players and he sought a way to fit in to the clan's jams.

After graduating from Kent State University, he moved to Chicago and began what turned out to be a 25-year career in business. But the blues always beckoned. He hung out at the clubs and studied harp with Jerry Portnoy, Muddy's reed-bender for most of the 1970s. And he cut his musical teeth on stage by sitting in with Pinetop Perkins, Carey Bell, Bo Diddley and others.

Tim relocated to Boston in 1991 for work. That's where he co-founded The Porch Rockers, a group that eventually released three albums. He didn't make the leap to music fulltime until 2010 or so, 12 years after being a finalist in the Boston Blues Challenge. In the time since, he's

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released two previous CDs – Looking Into The Sun and Million Stars – and written an instructional book, The Talking Harmonica.

Gartland moved to Nashville in 2015, where Kevin McKendree, a longtime bandmate of Delbert McClinton, produced this album. It's a good fit. Despite his Rust Belt and New England background, his relaxed attack on diatonic and chromatic harmonica and his baritone stylings are a perfect fit in the Music City landscape.

He's backed here by Tom West on keyboards, Tom Britt on electric and slide guitar, Lynn Williams on drums and Steve Mackey on electric and upright bass. Wendy Moten — whose song "Come In Out Of The Rain" peaked at No. 5 in the Billboard Adult Contemporary charts — provides backing vocals, and McKendree adds piano and organ on three cuts.

All of the material here is original. The loping "What The Blues Look Like" runs down all of the themes popular to the music in one neat package to start the set. Gartland's attack on the reeds features single-note runs, and his vocals are molasses sweet. Next up, Tim has an "Hour's Worth" of whiskey but "an evening to kill" in a medium fast shuffle highlighted by West's work on the keys.

"I Had It All" is a slow blues regret on chromatic about losing the love of your life through your own ignorance, while the title tune, "If You Want A Good Woman," relies on a country feel as it advises to be a good man and to give the lady reasons to believe in you. The ballad "I Come When You Call" is a love song of the first order, while the funky instrumental "Eight Ball" gives Gartland space to stretch out on the diatonic.

"If That's What You Call Love" questions a woman's words in contrast to her actions before "Introduce Me To Your Hat" suggests that the subject should be himself/herself instead of changing appearance in an attempt to be someone else. "Too Many Groceries" is a bit of blue-eyed soul about someone who's "as subtle as a train wreck." It alludes to her issues by stating she has "too many groceries for one bag." Gartland refers to the constant bombardment of pharmaceutical ads on TV in "Where's The Cure For You" before tipping his hat to Willie Dixon in "Willie That's Who" — the "man who put the wang in the dang doodle and was born the seventh son" before a speedy instrumental — "Go West!" — brings the set to a close.

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