

Hot Tuna - Hot Tuna (1970)

Written by bluesever

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1. *"Hesitation Blues" (traditional, arranged by Kaukonen / Casady) – 5:05*
2. *"How Long Blues" (Carr) – 3:24*
3. *"Uncle Sam Blues" (traditional, arranged by Kaukonen / Casady) – 5:04*
4. *"Don't You Leave Me Here" (Morton) – 2:50*
5. *"Death Don't Have No Mercy" (Davis) – 6:10*
6. *"I Know You Rider" (traditional, arranged by Kaukonen / Casady) – 3:59*
7. *"Oh Lord, Search My Heart" (Davis) – 3:47*
8. *"Winin' Boy Blues" (Morton) – 5:25*
9. *"New Song (For the Morning)" (Kaukonen) – 4:55*
10. *"Mann's Fate" (Kaukonen) – 5:20*

- * Jorma Kaukonen — acoustic guitar, vocals
- * Jack Casady — bass
- * Will Scarlett — harmonica

When Hot Tuna's self-titled debut album was released in May 1970, it seemed like the perfect spin-off project for a major rock group, Jefferson Airplane's lead guitarist and bass player indulging in a genre exercise by playing a set of old folk-blues tunes in a Berkeley coffeehouse. The music seemed as far removed from the Airplane's acid rock roar as it did from commercial prospects, and thus, it allowed these sometimes overlooked bandmembers to blow off some steam musically without threatening their day jobs. In retrospect, however, it's easy to hear that something more was going on. Friends since their teens, Jorma Kaukonen and Jack Casady had developed a musical rapport that anchored the Airplane sound but also existed independently of it, and shorn of the rock band arrangements and much of the electricity (Casady still played an electric bass), their interplay was all the more apparent. Kaukonen remained the accomplished fingerpicking stylist he had been before joining the Airplane, while Casady dispensed with the usual timekeeping duties of the bass in favor of extensive contrapuntal soloing, creating a musical conversation that was unique. It was put at the service

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of a batch of songs by the likes of the Reverend Gary Davis and Jelly Roll Morton with the occasional Kaukonen original thrown in, making for a distinct style. Kaukonen's wry singing showed an intense identification with the material that kept it from seeming repetitious despite the essential similarities of the tunes. (Harmonica player Will Scarlett also contributed to the mood.) The result was less an indulgence than a new direction. --- William Ruhlmann, allmusic.com

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