

Mick Kolassa & Friends - Double Standards (2018)

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01. 600 Pounds Of Heavenly Joy (Feat. Sugaray Rayford) 02. I Just Want To Make Love To You (Feat. Heather Crosse) 03. It's Tight Like That (Feat. Victor Wainwright) 04. Fever (Feat. Annika Chambers) 05. Nobody Knows You When You're Down And Out (Feat. Tas Cru) 06. Rock Me Baby (Feat. Tullie Brae) 07. Key To The Highway (Feat. Eric Hughes) 08. Spoonful (Feat. Erica Brown) 09. It Hurts Me Too (Feat. Patti Parks) 10. Early In The Morning (Feat. David Dunavent) 11. Don't You Lie To Me (Feat. Gracie Curran) 12. Outside Woman Blues (Feat. Jeff Jensen) 13. Ain't Nobody's Business (Feat. Annika Chambers, Victor Wainwright, Gracie Curran, Sugaray Rayford, Erica Brown & Jeff Jensen)

Mick Kolassa has assembled a collection of classic blues songs on his new album. Double Standards is a celebration of the greatest blues songs, performed as duets with some of his musical friends. Mick's love of many blues styles is well known, and this album brings the listener a wide range of blues, from down home to classic Chicago to jazzy to blues rock, Mick and his friends bring you the many faces of the blues. As with the previous albums the proceeds from Double Standards will go to the Blues Foundation's HART Fund and Generation Blues programs. ---cdbaby.com

Mississippi-based guitarist and vocalist Mick Kolassa gathers a bunch of his friends for duets in this set of blues standards. Blues is often rowdy and raucous, but here Kolassa and friends demonstrate how the idiom can be played with finesse and class, albeit rather casually. Kolassa has a deep voice perfectly suited for the blues and could carry this material quite easily by himself, yet the contrasts, the call and response, and the general rapport of the proceedings lifts his performances too. He says, "I learn more with every project and this one forced me to step up and stretch—I let my partners set the vocal style for the song and then worked to fit into their

groove. What a blast!"

Although the album comes across as a loose affair, it took some time to complete. Basic tracks were laid out, together with scratch vocals, in December 2016. In January 2017, during IBC week, the first duet was recorded, and this continued as different artists came to town. In the end, they used four different studios at Ardent in Memphis as well as working with producer Jeff Jensen in his own studio.

Anyone familiar with blues, and even some that aren't, will recognize many of these songs: "I Just Want to Make Love to you," "Spoonful," "Key to the Highway," to name just three. Of the thirteen selections, three were penned by Willie Dixon and three by Tampa Red. Apart from stellar duet performances from Annika Chambers ("Fever"), Gracie Curran ("Don't You Lie to Me"), and Victor Wainwright ("It's Tight Like That"), Alice Hasan's violin is an especially nice touch on "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out" and "It Hurts Me Too." Kolassa plays guitar on just three tracks, as Jeff Jensen handles most of those parts, along with a core band.

The album closes in fine style with almost each of the twelve guests taking a verse on "Ain't Nobody's Business" before all join in on the chorus. An album of standards can just as easily flop as succeed as most listeners have a favorite version of each song in mind. Yet, these musicians find unique ways to interpret the material, making an enjoyable listen. --Jim Hynes, elmoremagazine.com

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