

## Sorry But I Can't Take You - Women's Railroad Blues (1980)

Written by bluesever

Sunday, 10 April 2016 16:02 - Last Updated Sunday, 10 April 2016 17:12

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*A1 - Trixie Smith Freight Train Blues* Bass – Richard Fullbright Clarinet, Soprano Saxophone – Sidney Bechet Drums – O'Neill Spencer Guitar – Teddy Bunn Piano – Sammy Price Trumpet – Charlie Shavers Vocals – Trixie Smith Written-By – Murphy, Dorsey

*A2 - Clara Smith Freight Train Blues*

Clara Smith And Her Jazz Trio Clarinet – Cecil Scott, Don Redman Piano – Porter Grainger Vocals – Clara Smith Written-By – Murphy, Dorsey

*A3 - Bessie Smith Chicago Bound Blues*

Clarinet – Don Redman Piano – Fletcher Henderson Vocals – Bessie Smith Written-By – Lovie Austin

*A4 - Trixie Smith Choo Choo Blues*

Trixie Smith And Her Down Home Syncopaters Clarinet – Buster Bailey Cornet – Howard Chambers Piano – Fletcher Henderson Trombone – Charlie Green Vocals – Trixie Smith Written-By – John T. Erby

*A5 - Trixie Smith Railroad Blues*

Trixie Smith And Her Down Home Syncopaters Banjo – Charlie Dixon Clarinet – Buster Bailey Cornet – Louis Armstrong Piano – Fletcher Henderson Trombone – Charlie Green Vocals, Written-By – Trixie Smith

*A6 - Clara Smith The L & N Blues*

Piano – Lemuel Fowler Vocals – Clara Smith Written By – P. Henri

*A7 - Bertha Chippie Hill Panama Limited Blues*

Banjo – Johnny St. Cyr Clarinet, Alto Saxophone – Artie Starks Cornet – Shirley Clay Drums – Cliff Jones Trombone – Preston Jackson Vocals – Bertha Chippie Hill Written-By – Richard M. Jones

*A8 - Ada Brown Panama Limited Blues*

Banjo – Johnny St. Cyr Clarinet, Alto Saxophone – Albert Nicholas Piano – Luis Russell Tenor Saxophone – Barney Bigard Vocals – Ada Brown Written-By – Richard M. Jones

*B1 - Sippie Wallace Mail Train Blues*

Cornet – Louis Armstrong Piano – Hersal Thomas Vocals, Written-By – Sippie Wallace

*B2 - Martha Copeland Mr Brakeman Let Me Ride Your Train*

Clarinet – Bob Fuller, Ernest Elliott Piano, Written-By – Porter Grainger Vocals – Martha Copeland

*B3 - Bessie Jackson T N & O Blues*

Piano – Walter Roland Vocals – Bessie Jackson Written-By – Lucille Bogan

*B4 - Lucille Bogan I Hate That Train Called The M & O*

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Guitar – Unknown Artist Guitar [Second] – Unknown Artist Vocals, Written-By – Lucille Bogan

### *B5 –Blue Lou Barker He Caught That B & O*

Danny Barker's Fly Cats Bass – Wellman Braud Clarinet – Buster Bailey Drums – Unknown Artist Guitar – Danny Barker Piano – Sammy Price Trumpet – Henry Red Allen Vocals – Blue Lou Barker Written-By – Amos Easton

### *B6 –Sister Rosetta Tharpe This Train*

Vocals, Guitar – Sister Rosetta Tharpe Written-By – Traditional

### *B7 –Nora Lee King Cannon Ball*

Pete Brown's Band Alto Saxophone – Pete Brown Bass – Charlie Drayton Clarinet – Jimmy Hamilton Drums – Roy Nathan Piano – Sammy Price Trumpet – Dizzy Gillespie Vocals – Nora Lee King Written-By – Williams, King, Price

Hats off to Rosetta Reitz for putting together an incredible catalog of women's classic blues on her Rosetta label. Besides filling a glaring gap in the blues record bins, the label's various compilations and single-artist discs feature both well-known and obscure female blues singers, bringing to life a black woman's take on a world defined in many ways by the great migration of southern blacks to northern cities like Chicago and New York (mainly to escape draconian Jim Crow laws and find better paying jobs). Primarily covering the 1920s and '30s, this fine collection in the label's Women's Heritage Series chronicles the plight of women left behind as thousands of husbands "rode the blinds" north.

While these New York and Chicago-recorded sides reveal that many of the singers here had some means to make the train fares, most southern black women were too poor to come up with the money or not generally willing to risk death jumping a freight. Beautifully illustrating the split between the obvious attraction to railroad lore and the anguish of denial, the narrative of Clara Smith's "Freight Train Blues" switches from an impressionistic chronicle of boxcars and brakemen to the harsh reality of a woman crying alone back home when her man beats the blues by catching a train. And while most of the songs here, including Trixie Smith's "Choo Choo Blues" and Blue Lou Barker's "He Caught That B&O," mirror similar sentiments, one also hears Martha Copeland's chronicle of a southern woman's desire to escape the chill of the north and return to Alabama and her man, as well as Sister Rosetta Tharpe's mythical casting of the train as a means to heaven.

Beyond sociological concerns, this collection contains some of the most enjoyable blues on record, taking in the work of stars like Bessie Smith and Sippie Wallace along with tracks by less well-known, but equally impressive, singers like Nora Lee King and Bessie Jackson. The album's cast of jazz musicians (the standard support for these and other classic blues divas) is

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superb as well, and includes Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet, Don Redman, Henry "Red" Allen, and Dizzy Gillespie. From voice to horn and gruff to sweet, this essential collection reveals a rich world of blues expression often overlooked. ---Stephen Cook, Rovi

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