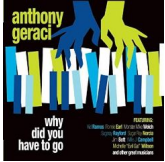


Anthony Geraci - Why Did You Have To Go (2018)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Why Did You Have To Go* 3:35 2 *Don't The Grass Look Greener* 3:11 3 *Fly On The Wall* 3:52 4 *Angelina, Angelina* 6:23 5 *Long Way Home* 3:08 6 *Two Steps Away From The Blues* 3:29 7 *Time's Running Out* 5:15 8 *Baptized In The River Yazoo* 5:14 9 *Too Many Bad Decisions* 4:04 10 *What About Me* 3:45 11 *Hand You Your Walking Shoes* 3:39 12 *My Last Good-Bye* 9:14 13 *A Minor, Affair* 5:10 Piano, Producer, Organ [Hammond] – Anthony Geraci + Bass – Michael "Mudcat" Ward, Willie J. Campbell Drums – Marty Richards, Jimi Bott, Neil Gouvin Guitar – Monster Mike Welch, Kid Ramos, Ronnie Earl, Troy Gonyea Piano, Vocals [Vocal Du] – Willie J. Laws (8) Saxophone – Gordon Beadle Trumpet – Doug Woolverton Vocals – Sugar Ray Norcia (1,7,12), Sugaray Rayford (2,4,5), Michelle "Evil Gal" Willson (6,10), Dennis Brennan (9,11), Brian Templeton (10) Vocals, Rhythm Guitar – Willie J. Laws (3)

Boston-based Anthony Geraci has one of the most in-demand keyboard players in the blues for decades and possesses a fine singing voice himself, but he's yielded the mike to who's who cast of vocalists for this powerful, all-original CD, his first effort in his new collaboration with Duke Robillard's Blue Duchess/Shining Stone Records imprint.

It's truly an all-star cast, including Sugar Ray Norcia, native Texans Sugaray Rayford and Willie J. Laws, and a trio of Bay State favorites: Michelle "Evil Gal" Willson, Brian Templeton and Dennis Brennan. But that should come as no surprise for anyone who's witnessed Anthony in action.

A native of New Haven, Conn., he took his first piano lesson at age four and fell in love with the blues in high school. Formally trained at Berklee College Of Music, where he earned a bachelor of arts degree, and Skidmore College, where he earned his master's, he's a gifted composer and arranger who polished his blues chops at the feet of three of three legends: David Maxwell,

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Roomful Of Blues co-founder Al Copley and Ron Levy.

A founding member of both Norcia's Sugar Ray And The Bluetones and Ronnie Earl & The Broadcasters, Anthony's been a professional musician for four decades, has been nominated for the Blues Music Association's Pinetop Perkins Piano Player Of The Year award each of the past three years. This is the seventh album he's released under his own name, including two as frontman for the band Little Anthony And The Locomotives and a dual project with Sugar Ray. His 41 other credits include the Grammy-nominated SuperHarps with Charlie Musselwhite, James Cotton, Billy Branch and Carey Bell, and Fifty Shades Of Blue, his most recent solo effort in 2015, which garnered BMA nominations for album, traditional album and song of the year.

Geraci currently splits his time among the Bluetones, and two supergroups – the West Coast-based The Proven Ones and The Boston Blues All-Stars, and he weaves many of them into the rich musical tapestry you'll hear here, including guitarists Monster Mike Welch, Laws, Earl, Troy Gonyea and Kid Ramos, bassists Michael "Mudcat" Ward and Willie J. Campbell, drummers Marty Richards, Neal Gouvin and Jimi Bott, sax player Gordon "Sax Gordon" Beadle and trumpet player Doug Woolverton.

The album opens with the slow-blues lover's lament, "Why Did You Have To Go," with Norcia handling plaintive lyrics that find him alone in the home recently abandoned by his one-and-only love. Welch's stylish single-note guitar riffs and the horns set the stage for the treasures to come. The tempo quicks to a medium-fast shuffle with jazzy soul-blues feel for Rayford's "Don't The Grass Look Greener," delivered from the standpoint of being cast out and replaced by someone else.

Anthony's piano comes to the fore in most of the tunes that follow. The straight-ahead blues "Fly On The Wall," is delivered by Laws, deals with a woman too many lovers, and in the slow blues, "Angelina, Angelina," Rayford bemoans being left alone at the courthouse door following a divorce. He remains in charge for "Long Way Home," which has a true, funky, New Orleans feel, before Willson makes her first appearance for the jazzy ballad "Two Steps Away From The Blues."

Norcia's in charge on vocals and harmonica for the stop-time pleaser, "Time's Running Out," before Geraci and Laws team for a stripped-down slow-blues piano/vocal duet in "Baptized In The River Yazoo." "Too Many Bad Decisions," featuring Brennan, is an old-school barrelhouse

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piano number with strong sexual overtones, while the jazzy duet ballad "What About Me" finds Willson wanting to resume a failed lover affair and Templeton wary and still affected by a broken heart.

The tempo quickens again for the Big Easy-flavored "Hand You Your Walking Shoes," sung by Brennan, before "My Last Good-Bye" features a broken-hearted Norcia at the mike, wondering why his lady has left him and knowing he never had the courage to ask her why. It's an unhurried, nine-minute opus in which Earl, Geraci and Sugar Ray all take stellar extended deep blues solos. The action ends with "A Minor, Affair," a sweeping, sophisticated jazz with strong blues overtones. ---Marthy Gunter, bluesblastmagazine.com

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