

Vintage#18 - Grit (2017)

Written by bluesever

Saturday, 29 April 2017 15:31 -

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1. *Diamonds Are Optional* (3:21) 2. *Is This Too Good* (3:37) 3. *Love Hangover* (4:45) 4. *Million Miles* (8:24) 5. *Circles* (3:35) 6. *Pieces* (5:50) 7. *Just Got Back From Baby's* (5:26) 8. *Poor Me* (4:16) 9. *Remember* (4:30) 10. *Good Eye* (2:38) 11. *Circles Down Home* (4:14)
Robbin Kapsalis – vocals Bill Holter – guitar Mark Chandler – bass Alex Kuldell – drums

Since 2013, Vintage#18 has become well-known in a very short time as a dynamic soul and blues band igniting stages throughout the Northern Virginia, Maryland and Washington D.C. areas with their engaging live performance and stick-to-your-bones groove.

The energy of the band is undeniable and together Vintage#18 delivers hard-driving blues rhythms and soul grooves you can move to. The band has many influences a host of Stax and Chess artists.

Their debut album features eight original songs written by Vintage#18 and two covers.
---cdbaby.com

Don't be misled by the name. Vintage #18 is a relatively new group making its recording debut here as it delivers a collection of nine originals and two covers with an old-school soul-blues feel.

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Influenced by the catalog of Stax and Chess records — and Koko Taylor and Etta James in particular, the band is an aggregation of veteran musicians who got together in 2013 and is based out of Washington, D.C. Vintage #18 is fronted by Robbin Kapsalis, a Chicago native who grew up in Atlanta. Kapsalis' vocal range is fairly limited, but that doesn't get in the way whatsoever. She's a polished vocalist with a deep, sultry alto delivery.

The band's led by Bill Holter, a guitarist with a pleasing, unhurried style. A dealer in vintage instruments whose background includes jazz and blues-rock influences, he's worked with a wide variety of artists, ranging from the Bay City Rollers to the Prime Suspects and Monster Fun Package. They're backed by bassist/keyboard player/slide guitarist Mark Chandler, who's spent time with Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, Charlie Sayles, Sleepy LaBeef and The Coasters, and Alex Kuldell, who's career includes lengthy service time as a military drummer.

Funded partially through a Kickstarter campaign, Grit kicks off with "Diamonds Are Optional," a funky stop-time love song with an old-time feel delivered atop a steady, repetitive guitar hook. It's the first of three originals to open the set. Chandler's bass run introduces "Is This Too Good?" as Robbin wonders whether she and her new lover are truly destined to be with each other. Holter's brief guitar runs have a slight psychedelic feel.

Next up, "Love Hangover" is a new walking blues, not the Diana Ross tune of the same name. It continues the thoughts expressed in the previous number with the singer still experiencing the afterglow of a night of romance. It picks up speed for a lengthy guitar solo before dropping back to the opening pace. Bob Dylan's "Million Miles" gets a slow blues feel before the pace quickens for "Circles," a plea for help in finding a new direction, and ratchets down again for "Pieces," a bittersweet memory of the best part of a failed romance.

"Just Got Back From Baby's," first recorded in 1971 by ZZ Top and featuring Chandler, follows before four more originals follow. "Poor Me" is a slow soul-blues lament about the speedy end of a love affair, while the rocker "Remember" recalls the way things used to be. The uptempo "Good Eye" is delivered atop a regimented beat as Robbin sings about keeping one eye on her current guy while searching for another man with the other. The steady tempo "Circles Down Home" brings the set to a close as it describes seeing the light of change shining through despite living a repetitive life.

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Available through iTunes and Amazon, Grit is a solid debut. The material is both fresh and comfortably familiar. It'll be interesting to hear what Vintage #18 has to say going forward.

---Marty Gunther, bluesblastmagazine.com

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