



NRBQ brass tacks

1. WAITIN' ON MY SWEETIE PIE
(Ligon)
2. GREETINGS FROM DELAWARE
(Adams)
3. SIT IN MY LAP
(Adams)
4. FIGHTIN' BACK
(McDonough)
5. IT'LL BE ALRIGHT
(Ligon)
6. PLACES FAR AWAY
(Adams)
7. THIS FLAT TIRE
(Adams)
8. CAN'T WAIT TO KISS YOU
(McDonough)
9. I'D LIKE TO KNOW
(Hoke)
10. I'M NOT HERE
(Adams/Ligon)
11. LOVE THIS LOVE WE GOT
(Adams/Ligon/McDonough)
12. GETTING TO KNOW YOU
(Rodgers/ Hammerstein II)

Bonus Tracks

13. THAT MAKES ME A FOOL
(Early Version) (Ligon)
14. YES I HAVE A BANANA
(Adams/Ligon/McDonough)
15. RADIO SPOT -
RHODES ALL OVER THE MAP
(Adams)



Terry Adams piano, clavinet, harmonica on
"I'd Like To Know," vocals
Scott Ligon guitar, banjo, 2nd piano on
"Love This Love We Got," vocals
Casey McDonough bass, vocals
Conrad Choucroun drums

with:

Joe Camarillo drums on "Greetings From Delaware"
& "I'm Not Here"
Jimmy Gordon harmonica on "This Flat Tire"

Produced by Big Notes

Recorded and Mixed by Norm DeMoura
at Harmonium Studio

Mastered by Alan Stockwell

Photography by Norm DeMoura

Original Design by David Greenberger

Reissue Design by Greg Allen

Liner Notes by John DeAngelis

Project Co-ordinator: Tib Miller

Piano Tuner: John Dwyer and John Krucke

Technical Assistance: John Burke

Aide-de-camp: Jill Christiansen

Business Affairs - Glenn Schwartz

Project Assistance - Audrey Bilger, Dutch

Cramblitt, Lee Lodyga, Cheryl Pawelski,
and Brad Rosenberger

Getting Down to *Brass Tacks* with NRBQ

If you look it up in your dictionary, you'll find that "getting down to brass tacks" means to get down to some sort of serious business. But for NRBQ—in general, and specifically on this outstanding album from 2014—it means getting down to the business of making unique, memorable music while also having some serious fun.

And with "Waitin' On My Sweetie Pie" as the opening track, *Brass Tacks* gets off to a merry start as drummer Conrad Choucroun lays down a lively and infectious rhythm. Guitarist/vocalist Scott Ligon, who wrote the song, says "It's only two chords, but when it's right, it's really happy." And it's very happy here!

Several of the songs here have a special emotional purity. Terry Adams' "Sit In My Lap" bubbles over with joy and innocence. And Scott's mostly acoustic "It'll Be Alright" has a lilting guitar intro and is both heartfelt and gorgeously melodic. Scott recalls, "I think that was the last song that got added to the record. Terry was saying, 'We need another song from you. We're missing something from you'."

One of the reasons for the depth and strength of *Brass Tacks* is the fact that the original material spans some 50 years. The hypnotic, mystical vibe of "Places Far Away" is rooted in the Lydian scale melody that Terry wrote while still a teenager in Louisville, and it features sparse, percussive piano interjections and adventurous solos that are absolutely uplifting. And at the other end of the timeline, the joyous "Love This Love We Got" was actually written in the studio while NRBQ was recording this album. "Terry had the chorus in the studio that night," says Casey McDonough. "He sent Scott and me to different rooms to finish the song. Scott came up with the verse melody, but had no words, so I wrote them." The track is also unique in being the first NRBQ recording with two pianists—Terry and Scott.

The subject matter of the songs is also wonderfully varied. "Greetings From Delaware" has a cheerful calypso-like intro/outro sandwiching an account of out-of-control credit card usage with some appropriately ominous musical touches. "That's probably my favorite track on the record," says Scott. "Terry's songwriting is just so unusual. It's always such a kick to see what he's gonna come up with." And Casey adds, "Those drum fills that Joe Camarillo played on that song . . . we were like . . . where did that come from?" Another song, the bluesy "This Flat Tire," about four guys having a possibly metaphorical conversation in a car, has a real sense of immediacy and a dissonant but uplifting chorus. "I'm Not Here" is Terry's delightful first-person account of a guy demanding a little privacy in an invasive world. It has great lines like "I might be kissin' on my baby, howlin' at the moon, my brain be on vacation, and it won't be back 'till noon," a killer groove, and Scott's melodically contrasting bridge.

And then there are the arrangements. With deft touches like reed organ, harpsichord, marimba, clavichord, koto, banjo, autoharp, harmonica, bells, sleigh bells, and finger cymbals, the lucky listener will feel as if they've stumbled onto the band's private musical playground. On "Waitin' On My Sweetie Pie," Terry had NRBQ keyboard technician John Krucke detune the piano in order to achieve the desired sound. Guest artist/friend Jimmy Gordon, who also solos on "These Blues" from Terry's *Terrible* album, contributes an eerie harmonica solo on "This Flat Tire." And then there's the deliciously out-of-control fretless banjo played by Scott on "I'm Not Here" that has to be one of the most memorable moments on any NRBQ record, and it makes me laugh every time I hear it. "I didn't even know they *made* fretless banjos," Scott says. "But for some reason, (recording engineer) Norm DeMoura had one!"

Brass Tacks is also noteworthy for being the first album with Casey McDonough, which means that the front line of Terry, Scott and Casey has now been together for more than 10 years. And Casey's friendship with Scott goes back over 20 years, so they have a strong musical kinship. When they harmonize on songs like Casey's ebullient "Can't Wait To Kiss You" and the charmingly quirky, folky-with-a-backbeat "I'd Like To Know" (written by longtime NRBQ musical associate Jim Hoke), it's almost impossible to tell their voices apart. Says Scott, "Casey has this amazing ability to blend with whoever he's singing with."

And speaking of "Can't Wait To Kiss You" and "I'd Like To Know," the former is one of the all-time-great "new-love" songs, and it makes me feel like I'm living in a world of limitless possibilities. And regarding "I'd Like To Know," Terry simply says, "It's great. It kills me!"

Brass Tacks also contains a buoyant performance of Casey's amusing country-and-western-based "Fightin' Back." I love listening to Terry's Clavinet take the place of what would normally be an electric guitar, including two exceedingly playful solos.

And finally, the unique and beautiful arrangement of Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Getting To Know You" from *The King And I* succeeds in turning it into as much of an authentic NRBQ song as all of the original material on the album. I especially love how the koto-and-orchestra-chimes section sounds like church bells. This is musical heaven on earth!

The *New York Times* once called NRBQ "the world's sloppiest virtuosos." But in my mind and heart, NRBQ are actually the world's most fun-loving virtuosos. And the proof of that is all over *Brass Tacks*. It reveals NRBQ operating on all cylinders—and on all four fully inflated tires—happily conspiring to make a joyful noise on a record overflowing with creativity and positivity. And the more you listen, the happier you'll be!

—John DeAngelis
June 2024



In case of fire
do not use elevators

Use stairways

