

## Honky Tonker of the Month

### PAUL SCHLESINGER AND HIS KNIGHTS OF TEXAS SWING

Paul Schlesinger And His Knights Of Texas Swing

★★★★★

*You Were Meant To Ruin My Dreams / This Song Is Just For You / Say Y Me Tib / Haunted Hungry Heart / Cat'n Around / I Guess I'll Just Say I Don't Know / Hang Your Head In Shame / A Little Bit Of Heaven / Ethyl In My Gas Tank / Pretty Words / Conscience, I'm Guilty / Are You Trying To Tell Me Goodbye / Walk Me To The Door / A Broken Heart For A Souvenir / Golden Slippers*

Producer: Paul Schlesinger

**Self Released**

49:10

Paul Schlesinger is a Texas fiddler of some note with a deep appreciation of traditional Western Swing and Texas-style honky tonk. However, despite that, and the title of his accompanying band, he prefers to call his particular brand of music "Texapolitan" as he sees it as not being "pure" Western Swing. Rather, he sees it as an amalgamation of both the Western Swing and Texas honky tonk and whose musical roots grew out of the Central Texas dance halls and from the 1930s to the present.

It certainly sounds like the sound of a Texas dancehall to me, and whatever the moniker, it's wonderful. Schlesinger bills it as, "Twin fiddles... twin guitars... three generations of Texas Swing musicians!" and it certainly delivers on all of its promises.

Schlesinger says that the music is built around six key elements, one of which he describes as his "own somewhat

unique vocal enunciation." I'd say that's a tad self-critical, but if you are one of those people who hates it when you can't understand what a singer is actually singing, you'll love Paul Schlesinger's clear enunciation.

The other elements that Schlesinger says go to make up the sound include rhythm guitar, "melodic" twin fiddles, "old-school, improvisational take-off rides" by Ray Tesmer on guitar, clean and simple country-swing drums, steel, and swing bass. I'd say the key word there is "melodic". These are songs from a time when they had tunes and words you could actually sing along (and dance) to.

The songs might be vintage, but are nearly all obscure, with only really *Walk Me To The Door* and *Hang Your Head In Shame* resembling being well trodden, and this album is an absolute delight from beginning to end. Many of the songs are from the repertoire of Jimmy Heap and the Melody Masters, who from the late forties into the seventies were a popular Texas dance band. They were also based in Schlesinger's hometown of Taylor, TX.

Many of the musicians featured here also have some

link to Jimmy Heap.

The opening three tracks (and one other) were penned by Melody Master Cecil "Butterball" Harris with *Say Y Me Tib* being the first commercial recording of a song performed live in the 1970s. I especially loved the fiddles and arrangement on *This Song Is Just For You*, which owe more to the Melody Masters than the 1960s country-pop stylings of Hank Locklin's version.

Among the other highlights are a great version of Marty Robbins' *Pretty Words*, albeit a little more 'old-timey' than Jody Nix cut it on his *Twin Fiddles Turn Me On* album a few years ago, the beautiful waltz, *I Guess I'll Just Say I Don't Know*, the Bob Wills tune *A Broken Heart For A Souvenir*, and the perfect two-stepper *Are You Trying To Tell Me Goodbye*, but it is quality throughout. Additionally, the package also includes a 24-page book filled with musician bios, anecdotes, and vintage photos making this an essential buy for historians as well as fans of traditional Texas country and Western Swing. Enchanting is maybe the word that sums it up best for me.

Duncan Warwick



### CAROLYN SILLS COMBO

Dime Stories: Volume Two

★★★



*Big Canoe / Even Villains Once Were Babies / Buffalo Bill's Defunct / Tinker To Evers To Chance / Rotary Phone Blues / Let The Teardrops Fall / Boot Heel Drag / Catalina Island / Why All This Talk / Lorene / Who Can I Count On / Hot Tamales! / Along The Pelican Trail*

Producer: Carolyn Sills And Gerard Egan

**Self Released**

44:06

Country band Carolyn Sills Combo return with a second album called *Dime Stories, Volume Two*, which is a rather odd title as we don't have a volume one! The new release is about half new songs and half cover versions, and while it is an entertaining trip it does lag a little behind the first CD.

Carolyn Sills' vocals are again strong and another highlight is the steel guitar of Charlie Joe Wallace.

The disc has two covers of Patsy Cline songs. *Let The Teardrops Fall*, which, with female backing singers, is a reasonable cover, but the Patsy Cline version is sensational. *Who Can I Count On* is fairly routine. However, any band who tackle Patsy Cline songs like these are either brave... or mad! A song like *Let The Teardrops Fall* will probably never be even matched, let alone improved.

The Louvin Brothers classic

# PAUL SCHLESINGER and his KNIGHTS OF TEXAS SWING

TWIN FIDDLES. TWIN GUITARS. THREE GENERATIONS OF TEXAS SWING MUSICIANS.

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"You have done a great job not only in honoring Jimmy Heap and the Melody Masters but also real country music in general."  
- Jimmy Heap, Jr, Texas Troubadours

"Paul's singing and re-creation of the twin fiddle, western swing sound is accurate and fun on every track."  
- Ray Campi, world rockabilly star



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Paul Schlesinger is a proud member of the Gatesville, TX Country Music Hall of Fame and recipient of its Country Swing Artist of the Year award for 2014.

"Your CD sure sounds good! Got some of my heroes on it, too."  
- Leon Rausch, Texas Playboys



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