

RENEGADE CREATION

(New York, NY)

When an album is released, featuring such extraordinary talent as Robben Ford, Jimmy Haslip and Gary Novak, it is perfectly reasonable to assume that 'jazz-rock fusion' will be on the menu, but when the presence of guitar virtuoso Michael Landau is added to the mix, music fans are treated to a heaping helping of expertly executed guitar-driven blues-rock...with a complimentary serving of 'fusion' on the side.

With RENEGADE CREATION, Ford and Landau split guitar/vocal responsibilities equally, each singing four of the album's tracks, each contributing a jazz-infused instrumental to the song list, each bringing their distinct guitar-styles and musical sensibilities to the table and each seemingly checking their egos at the door. Though there is no shortage of guitar from either of these gifted players, the album never feels like a vehicle for senseless showboating. The chemistry between Ford and Landau is impeccable and it is never more evident than when they are squaring off on tracks like "God and Rock 'N' Roll" and "Who Do You Think You Are". As they gently push one another to new levels of guitar greatness, they do so with poise and grace; never getting in each other's way and never hogging the spotlight.

Vocally the two artists' styles differ greatly. Ford delivers his four vocal tracks with passionate clarity, as Landau does so with a gritty Knopfler-esque swagger. This contrast from track to track keeps things fresh and interesting, in a way that a sole front-man can never achieve. Because Ford and Landau also split the bulk of the writing duties, the tracks that feature them on vocals are catered to their strengths and styles, providing the album with a diverse combination of flavors that manages to highlight each of their individual sensibilities, while never seeming out of place on the album as a whole.

In the wake of blues-rock releases from promising young talent like Joe Bonamassa and Jonny Lang, RENEGADE CREATION is an album that separates the men from the boys. Ford and Landau are exceptional talents that simply operate on a different plane than most other guitarists tackling the sub-genre. They, along with Haslip and Novak, have paid their dues with decades of experience backing the likes of James Taylor, Joni Mitchell, B.B. King, Ray Charles, Miles Davis, Chick Corea, Alan Holdsworth, Anita Baker and George Benson...to name a few. With RENEGADE CREATION the members of this "super-group" have returned to their bluesy roots, while staying true to their artistry. They're taking blues-rock to new levels of sophistication, often shying away from typical/tired conventions and in the process, hopefully, paving the way for the entire sub-genre to move forward.

J. Blake (American Blues News)