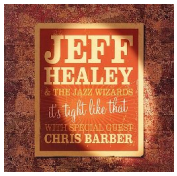
Jeff Healey - It's Tight Like That (2006)



1.Bugle Call Rag 2.Sing You Sinners play 3.Basin Street 4.Little Girl 5.Someday Sweetheart 6.Dark Town Strutters Ball play 7.Confessin' 8.Keep It To Yourself 9.Sheik Of Araby, The 10.Going Up The River 11.It's Tight Like That

Personnel: Jeff Healey: Guitar, Trumpet, Producer, Vocals Jesse Barksdale: Guitar Andy Krehm: Mastering Colin Bray: Bass Chris Barber: Trombone, Vocals, Guest Appearance

In the United States, the prosperity of the Roaring Twenties yielded a brand of upbeat jazz saturated with sexual innuendo and heedlessness. Across the northern border, Jeff Healey, a Canadian blues-rock guitarist, felt the significance of this traditional jazz. In his latest outing, he and his eight-piece band, the Jazz Wizards, conjur up some old magic.

Healey, who has been blind since infancy, plays the trumpet vivaciously on the earlier pieces. "Bugle Call Rag best displays his effervescent control over the brass instrument as he kicks the album off with a quick-stepping call to arms. Sometimes he switches to the guitar, supporting brass and reed solos with an eccentric dexterity.

Chris Barber, an established British jazz trombonist, guest stars on the album, but he is most endearing when he provides vocals on "Basin Street Blues (a Spencer Williams song made famous by Louis Armstrong) and his own "Goin' Up the River. Barber's voice feels silky without being entirely mellifluous, and even his meandering trombone solo in the former song is honeyed with joviality. On the latter tune, he walks the line of thoughtful doldrums, his vulnerability permeating the atmosphere, but Healey's climactic trumpeting and Gary Scriven's sweeping drumming maintain the record's buoyancy.

Healey also puts his voice to work on several songs, and though the coarseness of his baritone is to be expected of a blues crooner, it falls seamlessly into place and adds a contemporary texture to the standards. Even when his voice cracks at the start of "Someday Sweetheart, he follows through and the audience falls in love with his sympathetic tone.

Most of the tunes were performed live at Hugh's Room, a folk venue in Toronto, and since each song was always brimming with vim—upbeat melodies nestled between occasionally seductive blues—boisterous applause always followed. The octet produced a sound so clean that if it wasn't for the ovations, one would not know they were performing live. In contrast, there is a multi-dimensional quality that makes the band's camaraderie, or as Healey calls it, "musical interaction, palpable. Throughout, Healey and Barber uphold the idée fixe, a fast and loose frivolity that dominated both '20s jazz and this album. ---Ivana Ng, allaboutjazz.com

I have been a fan of Jeff Healey since the 80's. I am pleased that his "new" venture into Jazz and Blues finally got an album available in the US. Jeff is great on the trumpet, his guitar (as always) is fantastic, and his vocals are enjoyable. While I am not a fan of the trombone the fiddler with the Jazz Wizards was a surprise and is a lot of fun. If you are a Jeff Healey fan and like Jazz and Blues I would recommend adding this to your collection. --- J. Behn "mercyming" (Seattle, WA)

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