

Ben Webster With Strings - Sophisticated Lady (1956)

Written by bluesever

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01. *All Too Soon* 02. *Love Is Here To Stay* 03. *It Happens To Be Me* 04. *My Funny Valentine* 05. *You're Mine You* 06. *Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me* 07. *Prelude To A Kiss* 08. *Come Rain Or Come Shine* 09. *Sophisticated Lady* 10. *Love's Away* Ben Webster (tenor saxophone) Ralph Burns (arranger, conductor) Tony Scott (clarinet) Jimmy Hamilton (clarinet) Danny Bank (clarinet, flute, bass clarinet) Billy Strayhorn (piano, conductor) Teddy Wilson (piano) George Duvivier (bass) Louie Bellson (drums) The Duke Ellington Orchestra

There were at least three good reasons for recording these ten numbers: – as a trained violinist Ben Webster was more than predestined for jazz and string numbers. - secondly, without the meaty background of Duke Ellington's Orchestra he could endow the ballads new tonal hues; - and thirdly there was the excellent arranger Ralph Burns who here - far removed from earning his daily bread with Woody Hermann - ensured that sheets of music brimming over with brilliant arrangements were to be found on the music stands of the soloist Ben Webster and the string players. All the numbers are romantic ballads penned by Johnny Mercer, Harold Arlen, George Gershwin, Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn. Although the tempo is slow and the strings provide a thick carpet of sound, there is nothing here that could possibly be described as 'schmaltzy'. And this means that both jazz fans and romantic hearts will enjoy and praise this disc. Happily, the technical state of the 1954 recording tapes in the Verve archive is excellent so that the listener can experience and enjoy to the full the relaxed atmosphere of Norman Granz's recording studio. If you've never heard any of these numbers, then you should place the needle on "Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me" or "Sophisticated Lady". All other listeners will know that every single minute of this disc is pure magic! --- litediffusion.com

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