

Johnny Griffin & Eddie Lockjaw Davis - Tough Tenors (1960)

Written by bluesever

Wednesday, 06 November 2013 17:03 -

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01. *Tickle Toe* (Young) 5:27 02. *Save Your Love For Me* (Johnson) 7:06 03. *Twins* (Davis, Griffin) 6:32 04. *Funky Fluke* (Green) 9:14 05. *Imagination* (Van Heusen, Burke) 4:27 06. *Soft Winds* (Henderson) 7:17 Musicians: Johnny Griffin - tenor saxophone Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis - tenor saxophone Junior Mance - piano Larry Gales - bass Ben Riley – drums Recorded at Plaza Sound Studios, New York on November 4 & 10, 1960

If one feels their music getting a bit stale, perhaps a little too predictable, then they have a couple choices. They can dig back into their roots to reconnect with the music they love, or they can go head to head with a counterpoint in an effort to create sparks. Johnny Griffin and Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis choose the latter course in *Tough Tenors*, turning a half-dozen pieces into an enticing mix of edgy solos and synchronized ensemble playing. The fun stuff here bops along at a giddy pace, letting Griffin and Davis trade their tough leads, while pianist Junior Mance offers a slight pause with his swift keyboarding. Lester Young's "Tickle Toe" kicks off the affair with aplomb, and Davis/Griffin's "Twins" provides plenty of room for explosive solo work. The album's center rests with the nine-minute take on Bennie Green's "Flunky Flute," a spontaneous piece that eventually -- because of the players' intensity -- becomes an endurance test. The medium tempo of "Soft Winds" qualifies as a ballad for these guys, and the mellow groove makes it an easygoing closer. Bassist Larry Gales and drummer Ben Riley also do a fine job of keeping this boisterous crew on the ground. *Tough Tenors* is one of the many amazing jazz recordings from 1960, and will please saxophone fans, Davis/Griffin fans, and anyone who enjoys classic hard bop. --- Ronnie D. Lankford, Jr.

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