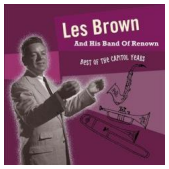
Les Brown and His Band of Renown - Best of the Capitol Years (2002)



1 I've Got My Love To Keep Me Warm 2 On The Alamo 3 Perfidia 4 Moonlight In VBermont 5 The Continental 6 Midnight Sun 7 Lover 8 Harlem Nocturne 9 The Piccolino 10 Shine On Harvest Moon 11 Tangerine 12 Ridin' High 13 Nina Never Knew 14 My Blue Heaven 15 Stardust 16 Tea For Two 17 Swingin' Down The Line 18 Younger Than Spring Time 19 This Nearly Was Mine 20 Invitation 21 The Sweetheart Of Sigma Chi 22 Frenesi 23 Just You, Just Me 24 Leap Frog 25 Goodnight Sweetheart Arranged By: Frank Comstock (tracks: 2 to 4, 6 to 8, 11 to 13, 17, 19 to 25), J. Hill (3) (tracks: 10, 14 to 16), Les Brown (tracks: 18), Skip Martin (tracks: 1, 5, 9), Sonny Burke (tracks: 18).

By the time that Les Brown signed with Capitol Records in the mid-'50s he had already become an internationally acclaimed clarinet and sax player as well as bandleader for nearly two decades. This single CD compilation gathers over two dozen tracks cut during the brief three-year stint (1955-1958) that Brown and his Band of Renown spent recording for Capitol Records. Although primarily known as a big band dance combo, Brown and company were much more jazz-oriented and improvisational than their swing contemporaries. However, they never lost their ability to keep dancers on their feet, as evidenced by their innumerable accolades from the popularity polls in Downbeat and Metronome magazines as well as the coveted Ballroom Operators Association. Much of the unqualified success that Brown retained during the burgeoning days of the rock & roll revolution was due to his association with arrangers such as Ben Homer, Wes Hensel, Skip Martin, and his primary collaborator, Frank Comstock. They keep the arrangements of pop standards "My Blue Heaven," "Tangerine," "Moonlight in Vermont," and "Shine on Harvest Moon," as well as the show tune "This Was Nearly Mine" -- from South Pacific -- light, easy, and deceptively unencumbered. The prowess of the various incarnations of the Band of Renown should not be underestimated either. The laid-back solo styles of Donn Trenner (piano) and Brown (clarinet) carry the combo with a sophisticated air borne in the spirit of the big bands. For example, "Frenesi" retains the large, elegant orchestration while simultaneously bearing the loose, metronomic quality of a jazz band. The same can be said of Comstock's tight brass arrangements, most specifically on "Just You, Just Me" and the definitive reading of "Harlem Nocturne." Also notable is the crystalline sound

quality throughout the package, which is the first in the CD realm to have accessed the original session tapes and remastered them with an ear for the audiophile's attention to detail and nuance. ---Lindsay Planer, Rovi

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