

Jessica Williams - Jessica's Blues

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Jessica Williams - Jessica's Blues (1997)



1. *Smoking Section* (4:29) [play](#) 2. *Chief Seattle Blues* (6:24) 3. *Sneak Preview* (5:43) 4. *See See Rider* (7:13) 5. *Dat's For Nat* (5:37) 6. *Blues For Bill* (5:52) 7. *Baby, Won't You Please Come Home* (6:38) 8. *Temporary Sanity* (4:43)

[play](#)

9. *St Louis Blues* (8:29) 10. *Raise Four* (5:48) 11. *Blue Jay* (5:34)

Personnel: Jay Thomas (tenor saxophone, trumpet) Jessica Williams (whistling, piano) Jeff Johnson (bass) Mel Brown (drums).

Virtuosic pianist Jessica Williams is best heard as an unaccompanied soloist, where her imagination and wit can run wild, but she also fares quite well when playing with sympathetic musicians. This outing matches her with bassist Jeff Johnson, drummer Mel Brown and (on seven of the 11 numbers) Jay Thomas, who shows that he is equally skilled on tenor and trumpet. The emphasis is on the blues (other than "Baby, Won't You Please Come Home"), but by using different tempos, moods, and to a small extent styles, the musicians perform a surprisingly varied program. Thomas' swinging tenor solos (in the tradition of Gene Ammons) and fluent trumpet (check out the ancient sound he gets while muted on "St. Louis Blues") are major assets; he sometimes overdubbed a second horn for the ensembles. However, Jessica Williams easily emerges as the main star, whether ripping into the cooking "Raised Fourth" (a Thelonious Monk line), playing a boogaloo-ish "Sneak Preview," hinting at Red Garland and Bill Evans, or contributing a whistle to "Smoking Section" (which is dedicated to Rahsaan Roland Kirk). This date is highly recommended to straight-ahead jazz fans and is yet another strong addition to Jessica Williams' rapidly growing discography. --- Scott Yanow, Rovi

Not many people can evoke Garner, Duke, Garland, Silver, Monk, Tyner and even Randy

Weston or Cecil Taylor in the course of one session. Few indeed can take basic aspects of these great stylists, say "watch what we can do with this" and go somewhere the original creator never went. Picasso's "Good artists imitate-great ones steal" maxim certainly comes to mind but I don't want to apply a term that leads us towards hype and away from seeing this woman's substantial achievements. Time and again she sets up an obvious reference point, Monk, say, or Tyner, and after having you admire how well it's been done, which is really all you can ask of a mainstream approach, she gets you to say, "Damn-McCoy didn't think of doing those subtle dynamic things that way" or "Even Monk wouldn't play a phrase that twisted." This is a very brave kind of originality that deserves hearing, especially when combined with a fine compositional and arranging sense, humor, and a shot of sheer rambunctiousness. Jay Thomas is convincing on trumpet and even better on tenor, and Jeff Johnson and Mel Brown are exemplary on rhythm. --- Duck Baker, jazztimes.com

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