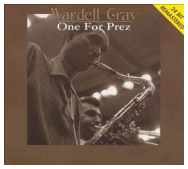
Wardell Gray - One for Prez (1988)



1 Dell's Bells 2:56 2 One For Prez 3:12 3 The Man I Love 3:04 4 Easy Swing 3:00 5 The Great Lie 4:45 6 Dell's Bells 3:00 7 One For Prez 3:14 8 The Man I Love 3:23 9 Easy Swing 3:06 10 Dell's Bells 3:09 11 Dell's Bells (Incomplete) 1:38 12 Dell's Bells 3:06 13 The Man I Love 3:34 14 One For Prez 3:05 15 One For Prez 2:54 16 One For Prez 2:45 Bass – Red Callender Drums – Chuck Thompson (tracks: 6), Harold "Doc" West (tracks: 1 to 5, 7 to 16) Piano – Dodo Marmarosa Tenor Saxophone – Wardell Gray

Wardell Gray's admitted direct and huge influence is Lester Young, and as a tenor saxophonist growing up in the passing lane between swing to bop, it would be difficult for anyone to ignore the so-called President of Jazz. Gray's time in Los Angeles with Dexter Gordon further refined his sound, but these recordings, his first as a leader, define the greatness of Gray. Originally recorded on 78s for Vogue Records, and an LP for the Fontana label, this collection is essentially a complete session, done November 23, 1946 in Hollywood, CA, with several alternate takes included. Drummer Harold "Doc" West and bassist Red Callender are the cream of the crop West Coast rhythm section at the time, and cook up a storm when asked to up the tempo. Alongside pianist Dodo Marmarosa, Gray is inspired to play unison lines with him on several occasions, especially in the introductions and melody lines of these pieces, as they mesh brilliantly into a stunning display of teamwork and compatibility. Five versions of "Dell's Bells" display the shared values between Gray and Marmarosa, as they scoot along in perfect tandem lines that seem telepathic, while also displaying the fluid dynamics of the tenor man. "One for Prez" falls along the same lines, basing this jam on the theme of "How High the Moon." Five versions of this one -- three at the end of the CD -- are shorter with a more edited introduction. Settling into a more cozy mood, three renditions of the ballad "The Man I Love" have Marmarosa in more of a support role, offering chiming chords and comping that is clearly interactive. Two takes of "Easy Swing" are just that, an original based on a simple theme adding big doses of the blues and an off-minor mode à la Thelonious Monk, a big influence on Marmarosa. Drummer Chuck Thompson replaces West for a sole take of "The Great Lie," an out-and-out furious bopper, all Gray, with Marmarosa and the ever brilliant Callender pumping up the rhythm to maximum levels. If you are fond of saxophonists like Don Byas, Chu Berry, Herschel Evans, and Lester Young, please include Gray and this wonderful introduction to him

as a leader, backed by a bulletproof all-star combo, all deserving high praise. ---Michael G. Nastos, AllMusic Review

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