

Hank Mobley - Jazz Message #2 (1956)

Written by bluesever

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A1 Thad's Blues A2 Doug's Minor B'ok B1 B. For B. B. B2 Blues Number Two B3 Space Flight Bass – Doug Watkins Drums – Art Taylor (tracks: A1, A2), Kenny Clarke (tracks: B1 to B3) Piano – Barry Harris (tracks: B1 to B3), Hank Jones (tracks: A1, A2) Tenor Saxophone – Hank Mobley Trumpet – Donald Byrd (tracks: B1 to B3), Lee Morgan (tracks: A1, A2)

Impressive lineups, both in the front line and the rhythm section, fuel the two 1956 sessions on this Savoy reissue. The players are committed, the writing is good, and the performances reward repeated listening. The result is a worthwhile precursor to the industry-standard hard bop Mobley would later record for Blue Note. Lee Morgan, then 18, joins Mobley on two tracks that have pianist Hank Jones, bassist Doug Watkins, and drummer Art Taylor in the rhythm section. Even if Morgan at this time was audibly still growing as a trumpet player, his poise, execution, and resourceful imagination were already the tools of a master. Donald Byrd, on form and playing with crispness and authority, moves into the trumpet chair for the three remaining tracks. This time it's Barry Harris on piano, Kenny Clarke on drums, and Watkins (again) on bass. The influence on Mobley of swing era tenors, from Lester Young to Illinois Jacquet, can be clearly heard on these tracks. Mobley's respect for and understanding of the pre-bebop style serve him well in his contribution to the development of the predominant jazz style that followed bebop. In addition to three Mobley originals, there is a blues by Thad Jones and another from Watkins. The standout track is Mobley's "Space Flight," a bright, up-tempo bop number that has memorable solos from Mobley, Byrd, Harris, and Clarke. The recording on this CD is very good but, as is common on Savoy reissues, the running time isn't long -- 32 minutes in the case of this jazz message. ---Jim Todd, AllMusic Review

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