James Taylor Quartet – Swinging London (2000)

1. Mister Twister 2. Numbers 3. Do It 4. Beat Club 5. Scene 6. Blues Stomp 7. Block 8. Weekender 9. Stand Up 10. Return Of The Hipster 11. Zoot Suit 12. Faster Pussycat
James Taylor (Hammond organ) Chris Montague (guitar) Andrew McKinney (bass) Adam Betts (drums) + Mick Taylor (sitar) Neil Sidwell (trombone) Steve Weston (harmonica) Dominic Glover , John Willmott (brass) Frank Ricotti (percussion) Liz Winstanley (vocals)

Subtitled The Library Sessions--Rare & Unreleased, you would be expecting a bunch of raw archive plunderings--and that's exactly what this rush of short slammers sounds like. Using kinky-booted spinners of the 1960s and 70s as a blueprint, these pointed kicks get alarmingly close to the real thing. In reality, Taylor laid them down in deepest Kent, taking two days in January 2000 to pen a complete set of pastiched originals, a further three spent in the studio. The results bristle with condensed energy, or as James himself says, "little explosions of joy". Originally intended for library usage, he aimed at TV and radio-sized bites, but the folks at Strange Fruit were keen to give these cuts independent life on their PLR subsidiary. Taylor crams in capsule Hammond solos at every opportunity, his dinky themes propelled by tight-assed horns and fuzzed guitar, with guest feature-spots for nicotine-clogged harmonica and psychedelic sitar, the pillaged styles ranging from soul-stomping, Courtelle-clad jumping beans to cinema intermission pah-pah-da-de-pah-pahs. The only drawback is that in the quest for 1960s authenticity we end up with that decade's average album length, fighting to reach 34 minutes of playing time. It's just as well that not a second of this is squandered... ---Martin Longley, amazon.com

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