

Lester Young - Lester Young With The Oscar Peterson Trio (1952/1997)

Written by bluesever
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1 *Ad Lib Blues* 5:54 2 *I Can't Get Started* 3:41 3 *Just You, Just Me* 7:41 4 *Almost Like Being In Love* 3:34 5 *Tea For Two* 7:45 6 *There Will Never Be Another You* 3:28 7 *(Back Home Again In) Indiana* 7:04 8 *On The Sunny Side Of The Street* 3:27 9 *Star Dust* 3:35 10 *I'm Confessin'* 3:42 11 *I Can't Give You Anything But Love* 3:23 12 *These Foolish Things* 3:32 13 *(It Takes) Two To Tango* 6:09 14 *I Can't Get Started (False Start)* 0:52 Bass – Ray Brown Drums – J.C. Heard Guitar – Barney Kessel Piano – Oscar Peterson Tenor Saxophone – Lester Young Recorded in New York City on November 28, 1952

Many things have been dubbed "American classics" over the years: Corvettes, hamburgers, milkshakes, the New York Yankees, blue jeans. But perhaps the term "American classic" can be no more fitting than in describing Lester Young. A jazzman who came from Louisiana, was famous for his "Kansas City" sound, yet spent a great deal of time in Minneapolis, Young was as original as original can be. A peer of Coleman Hawkins, Young was one of the very few tenor saxophonist to develop his own unique style on the instrument, and not be influenced by Hawkins. A quiet and reserved man, Young could tear up the house, and in fact did several nights with the Basie band, or float gently out on a slow ballad. Young's ethereal tone and unique sense of time gained him his own devotees, and today the tenor players who have not borrowed or been influenced by "Pres" are few.

Lester Young With The Oscar Peterson Trio is actually a merging of two albums from the 1950s, the original album of the same name, and *The President Plays With The Oscar Peterson Trio*. Both were recorded in November of 1958, and provide evidence to the contrary to the myth that Young never played in top notch form after his tragic military experience during World War II. While it is true that Young suffered from long bouts of depression and alcoholism after the shattering effects of the army, his playing may have been the sole part of him that survived the experience. By this point in his career, Young was opting for a simple rhythm section for most of his performances and recordings, in lieu of the Basie type of big band that Young first became famous with. And, as with many greats, as he grew older, Young began to concentrate

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more on ballads. But none of that proves that his playing was never as good as before the war. This collection seems destined to disprove that.

The disc starts out with the jumpin' "Ad Lib Blues" and swings throughout. Young swings with both fervor and style, displaying a complete command of his instrument and the song. The music goes where he directs it, but not in a man-handled style such as Hawkins was known for. Rather, Pres seemed to lead the music out front, gliding on his silvery tone, floating on the melody. Young's solos soar and glide, seemingly oblivious to the rest of the song, yet the songs always seem to follow Young's path. That was his genius...doing his own thing, and doing it so beautifully and powerfully that those around him could not help but be sucked in.

Most of the set stays the course with timeless standards, "I Can't Get Started", "Tea For Two", "Star Dust", "The Sunny Side Of The Street", and "These Foolish Things", and each time, Pres brings a few small twists to these familiar tunes. Young's lush tone wraps itself around the slower ballads, especially "I Can't Get Started", a specialty of the Pres. "Star Dust" is equally compelling, and "On The Sunny Side Of The Street" lopes happily along, infecting the listener with a smile. Also included is a rare track with Young supplying vocals, the slightly risqué, "Two To Tango". While Young's vocal performance is not exceptional in any way, shape, or form, it does offer the listener an opportunity to glimpse a more focused look at this most original of personalities.

Throughout the tracks, Peterson and his trio play wonderfully, but for save a few solos by guest guitarist Barney Kessel, this disc belongs to Young, even though Young was known for providing plenty of space for fellow musicians to interpret and solo. But with the sheer power of Young's personality, these recording dates follow him the way the music always seemed to.

Overall, this disc is gorgeously re-mastered, and the liner notes are interesting (and perhaps even better written) than this review. Of exceptional interest is the art work that is included in the cardboard tri-fold. A replica of the recording date program is reproduced here, showing the changes and additions to the original schedule...a very nice "extra" for the historical fan. But even for the Lester Young novice, this disc is a wise purchase. The tunes are easy on the ears, yet infectious for the feet. An excellent disc for Sunday afternoons, or any late night of the week.
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