Gerry Mulligan Meets Ben Webster – Original Master Recordings (1959)

1. Chelsea Bridge 2. The Cat Walk 3. Sunday 4. Who's Got Rhythm 5. Tell Me When 6. Go Home Mel Lewis - Drums Gerry Mulligan - Sax (Baritone) Jimmy Rowles - Piano Leroy Vinnegar - Bass Ben Webster - Sax (Tenor)

This 1959 recording brings together two fine musicians from worlds that one might not usually connect. Gerry Mulligan's light and airy baritone saxophone represents the "cool," and Ben Webster's burred and blustery tenor is the epitome of a very "warm" swing. When this was recorded, however, the quintet was actually a working band. Mulligan had a profound appreciation of Webster's talent, and the two shared an affection for the music of Duke Ellington and his composing partner, Billy Strayhorn, both of whom are represented here. With pianist Jimmy Rowles, an accompanist of legendary subtlety, and the sparkling rhythm team of bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Mel Lewis, this is wonderful small-group jazz, literally beyond classification. There's something unique in the ensemble sound of the two horns, with all the gravity concentrated in the higher tenor, but this is very much a blowing session, with Webster at his lyrical, passionate best. ---Stuart Broomer, amazon.com

This version of 'Chelsea Bridge' is the mature masterpiece of a musician who is extending his instrument and his vehicle with a perfection which is the end product of years of experience and consideration. Under present-day recording conditions, it would be a minor miracle if a completely perfect performance should find its way out of a studio onto a disc. This is as close to that miracle as we have any right to expect to come. The rest of the pieces simmer with a seemingly nonchalant, off-hand swing that is the essence of high artistry because it is so fully under control. Both Mulligan and Webster play throughout the disc with an honesty, mutual respect, and lack of surface qualities that can come only from matured artists. This is one of the

great records of jazz. --John S. Wilson, masterworks-series.com

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