

Gerry Mulligan - What Is There To Say? (1959)

Wpisany przez bluesever

Czwartek, 19 Kwiecień 2018 15:48 - Zmieniony Czwartek, 19 Kwiecień 2018 17:08

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1 *What Is There To Say?* 4:03 2 *Just In Time* 4:11 3 *News From Blueport* 5:03 4 *Festive Minor* 6:14 5 *As Catch Can* 3:54 6 *My Funny Valentine* 4:06 7 *Blueport* 8:47 8 *Utter Chaos* 4:23
Baritone Saxophone – Gerry Mulligan Bass – Bill Crow Drums – Dave Bailey Trumpet – Art Farmer
Tracks 1-4 recorded January 15, 1959, New York City tracks 5, 6, 8 recorded December 23, 1958, New York City track 7 recorded December 17, 1958, New York City

The last of the pianoless quartet albums that Gerry Mulligan recorded in the 1950s is one of the best, featuring the complementary trumpet of Art Farmer, bassist Bill Crow, and drummer Dave Bailey along with the baritonist/leader. This recording is a little skimpy on playing time but makes every moment count. Virtually every selection is memorable, with "What Is There to Say," "Just in Time," "Festive Minor," "My Funny Valentine," and "Utter Chaos" being the high points. Highly recommended both to Mulligan collectors and to jazz listeners who are just discovering the great baritonist. ---Scott Yanow, AllMusic Review

Baritone saxophonist Gerry Mulligan's 1959 major label debut features his self-penned liner notes advocating putting the fun back in jazz and not worrying about hipness. Mulligan states that the album is all about fun and he's not kidding.

The quartet of Mulligan, trumpeter Art Farmer, bassist Bill Crow and drummer Dave Bailey turn in a sophisticated set that Paul Desmond would be proud to call a very dry martini. Mulligan's brand of cool west coast jazz spotlighted his light, breathy tone and "skipping stone" phrasing. Its

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buoyancy propels every one of the eight tunes, divided among four Mulligan originals, one from Farmer and three standards.

The highlight in the piano less group is the interplay between Mulligan and Farmer. They chase each other up and down the charts producing baroque-like harmonic counterpoint and sometimes call and response patterns that produce an abundance of the advertised fun, efficiently propelled by Bailey's drumming and Crow's light-fingered bass.

When Mulligan and Farmer choose to dig in harder, you'd swear you were hearing a big band and not two guys.

The album opens with two familiar standards no doubt chosen to enhance the album's commercial potential. The title tune written by Yip Harburg and Vernon Duke was no doubt familiar to many potential buyers of the time though no doubt some reading this aren't (Harburg also wrote the lyrics to "Over the Rainbow" [and all of the "Wizard of Oz"'s songs] as well as "It's Only a Paper Moon" and many others).

It's likely that Columbia executives wanted a familiar opener. The follow up standard "Just in Time" is well known to all. Mulligan's Cannonball Adderley/Blue Note-ish "News From Blueport" (a play on "Blues From Newport") comes next, followed by "Festive Minor," the album's deepest and coolest number. It sounds like something Henry Mancini might have dug and was influenced by later on but that's just speculation.

The post bop "As Catch Can" the album's jippiest tune is followed by a gorgeous reading of "My Funny Valentine". Finally the quartet takes the album home with "Blueport" another uptempo number, followed by "Utter Chaos," which is anything but.

The music making is elegant and well-mannered in the cool California style (Mulligan's trumpeter had been at one point Chet Baker), yet the edges were sharply drawn and could cut when necessary.

The album is sonically superior, probably recorded at Columbia's legendary 30th Street Studios.

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Farmer is in one channel, Mulligan in the other, both floating on cushions of natural studio air, with Bailey center stage also bathed in sufficient air and reverb to create a coherent ensemble sound.

While the "6-Eye" original has a bit more warmth, the double 45 has a smoother more relaxing flow that better compliments the music.

The gatefold packaging is deluxe though the back jacket scan of the group huddling around microphones is pretty greyed out and miserable looking.

Altogether a wonderful reissue cut by Bernie Grundman from either the master tape or a flat transfer of the master. Either way, great sound and ideal cocktail hour or late night "end of the day" music that's easy to recommend to both jazz aficionados and casual jazz enthusiasts alike. ---Michael Fremer, analogplanet.com

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