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The Complete February 1957 Jimmy Smith Blue Note Sessions (# 154) (CD)

Text from mosaicrecords.com announcing this set:

"This cat is the eighth wonder of the world" - Miles Davis

We are proud that each and every Mosaic collection is "complete" in some way, depending on the scope of the project. Flipping through the Mosaic brochure reveals sets dedicated to an artist's key year or years; a comprehensive study of a musician's work in a particular idiom; all the sides an individual recorded for a particular record company; even the entire output of a label.

In other words, we play within the rules, because we want each set to be meaningful on its own terms.

Well, for Jimmy Smith, we settled on a strange but important boundary. Three days. And three days only.

A microcosm of his work for Blue Note

On February 11, 12 and 13, 1957, Jimmy Smith recorded enough material to fill five LPs in a wide range of settings that sum up the important work he did throughout his Blue Note career. Sextet jams, his famous trio, an all-star trio summit session, even a series of intriguing duets, were all recorded in that burst of creativity.

The February sessions were only a year after he was first discovered up at Small's Paradise by Blue Note founder Alfred Lion. His partner, Francis Wolff, remembered those early days:

"It was his first gig in New York - one week. He was a stunning sight. A man in convulsions, face contorted, crouched over in apparent agony, his fingers flying, his foot dancing over the pedals. The air was filled with waves of sound I had never heard before. The noise was shattering. A few people sat around, puzzled, but impressed."

"Impressed" is an understatement. He was hailed as "the Bird of the organ." Miles Davis had a similar reaction: "This cat is the eighth wonder of the world."

Worked in secret

Virtually no one had considered the possibilities of jazz organ until Jimmy Smith. He developed his own style and voice almost in secret, playing R&B dates on piano around Philadelphia but spending every spare minute on the Hammond organ, first renting time at a dollar an hour from an organ dealer until he could finally afford to buy one.

By the time he hit New York, Smith was ready to burst. And that's what you hear in this Mosaic reissue. Here, he jams with a sextet including Hank Mobley, Donald Byrd and Lou Donaldson; his own trio featuring Eddie McFadden on guitar and Donald Bailey on drums; an all-star trio with Art Blakey and Kenny Burrell; and duets with Donaldson and Blakey. Initially scattered over five Smith LPs, they've been brought together in recording order, together with a track that was issued only as a single and three tracks that have never been released. The booklet includes liner notes by Bob Blumenthal.

He may not have invented jazz organ. But no one who ever played the instrument after him would do it without Jimmy Smith as a reference point.

"These swinging and soulful recordings cemented Smith's place in jazz history as the man who made the electric organ an important instrument." - Keith Spore, Milwaukee Sentinel

Discography

All sessions were recorded at Manhattan Towers in New York City using remote recording equipment brought in by Rudy Van Gelder.

Only U.S. issue numbers are used in this discography.

(A) Donald Byrd (tp), Lou Donaldson (as), Hank Mobley (ts), Jimmy Smith (org), Eddie McFadden (g), Art Blakey (d).

February 11, 1957

tk.3 Falling In Love With Love BLP-1547
tk.4 First Night Blues (omit horns) unissued
tk.5 Funk's Oats 45-1677, BLP 1547
tk.6 Zing Went The Strings Of My Heart (omit horns) BLP 1556
tk.8 Groovy Date BLP 1548
tk.9 I Let A Song Go Out OF My Heart BLP 1548

(B) Lou Donaldson (as), Jimmy Smith (org).

February 12, 1957

tk.1 I'm Getting Sentimental Over You 45-1668, BLP 1548
tk.2 Summertime 45-1667, BLP 1551

same session, add Eddie McFadden (g), Donald Bailey (d).

tk.3 Somebody Loves Me (omit as) BLP 1556
tk.5 Plum Nellie BLP 1552
tk.6 Plum Nellie (alternate take) 45-1668

same session, but Kenny Burrell (g), Art Blakey (d) replace McFadden and Bailey.

tk.8 Billie's Bounce BLP 1552

tk.10 Yardbird Suite BLP 1551, BST 89903, BNLA 159-2

tk.11 There's A Small Hotel (no as) BLP 1551

tk.12 All Day Long 45-1676, BLP 1551, BST 89901

(C) Jimmy Smith (org), Eddie McFadden (g), Donald Bailey (d).

February 13, 1957

tk.3 The Third Day unissued

tk.4 All The Things You Are (omit g,d) BLP 1556

tk.6 The Fight (omit g,d) BLP 1556

tk.7 There Will Never Be Another You 45-1686, BLP 1556

tk.8 How High The Moon 45-1667, BLP 1547

tk.9 Buns A Plenty BLP 1552

tk.10 The Duel -1 BLP 1552

tk.11 Blue Moon 45-1685, BLP 1556, BNLA 400-2

tk.12 Cherokee unissued

-1 omit McFadden, Art Blakey replaces Bailey (d).

ALBUM INDEX

BLP 1547 A Date With Jimmy Smith - volume one

BLP 1548 A Date With Jimmy Smith - volume two

BLP 1551 Jimmy Smith At The Organ - volume one

BLP 1552 Jimmy Smith At The Organ - volume two

BLP 1556 The Sounds Of Jimmy Smith

BST 89901 Jimmy Smith's Greatest Hits (double LP)

BST 89903 Blue Note's Three Decades Of Jazz 1949-1959 (double LP)

BNLA 159-2 reissue of above

BNLA 400-2 Jimmy Smith (double LP)

Original sessions produced by Alfred Lion

Reissue produced by Michael Cuscuna

Executive producer: Charlie Lourie

Recording engineer: Rudy Van Gelder

Recorded in mono

All photographs by Francis Wolff

Design direction: Richard Mantel

Design production: InkWell Inc.

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Producer's note:

The wealth of material that Jimmy Smith recorded for Blue Note from 1956 to 1962 could generate a dozen boxed sets. We've selected this three-day run in the studio not only because of the exceptional quality of the music, but also because it is a wonderful microcosm of his output. There are sextet jams, Jimmy's own trio with and without a soloist added and an all-star trio with Art Blakey and Kenny Burrell, as well as some experimental solos and duets. These three days set the pattern for the various contexts in which Smith would record throughout his Blue Note career.

Because of the extremes in tune length, we have had to stray farther than usual from chronological order in order to fit this material into the LP and CD formats. Since we have had to break the mold in this regard, we've tried to make the LP sequencing as musically sensible as possible. The first selection on Discs Two and Three are out of chronological sequence.

Unfortunately, no Francis Wolff photos exist from these three sessions. For the booklet, we have selected other session shots by the participants from the period of 1956-58.

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