

**Buddy Tate/The Texas Twister**  
**New World Records 80352**

Buddy Tate remains, in his seventy-fourth year, one of the world's foremost stylists on the tenor saxophone and a tireless global traveler whose name is synonymous with emphatic, swinging jazz. Nearly half a century after he first made his mark in Kansas City, he leads--in partnership with trombonist Al Grey--a quintet that is one of the few mainstream bands to work regularly in the top jazz-club circuit. Indeed, his playing is more highly regarded now than ever before--and not merely because he is the rare survivor of a generation of giants.

He is, in fact, a finer, more expressive musician now than during the decade he starred with Count Basie, or the two subsequent decades during which he led a famously rousing septet at Harlem's Celebrity Club. This despite a run of bad luck, including a near-fatal accident (which badly scarred his hands), that might have broken the spirit of a less authoritative artist and man. He continues to present a familiar image at festivals, parties, and in clubs--all charm, impeccable manners and attire, the melancholy slump of his eyes balanced by a glinting smile--but his ballads are more urgent now, his celebrated Southwestern wail (he is a favorite son of Sherman, Texas) packs more wallop, his blues are of a depth and economy few can equal.

In a sense, Buddy has finally come into his own. From the first, he was accepted into the company of the great saxophone virtuosos of the twenties and thirties--Frank Trumbauer, passing through Texas while Buddy was still in his teens, encouraged him and became a lifelong friend--yet he was often overshadowed. Though he played with Count Basie on and off in the mid-thirties, he won the coveted seat vacated by the death of Herschel Evans, his friend and model, largely because he mastered Evans's style. Even as he developed his own style, sampled on such Basie classics as "Riff Interlude" and "Rock-a-bye Basie," he played as a secondary role to the band's other tenors: first, the utterly innovative Lester Young, then the incomparably dynamic Don Byas and overpowering Illinois Jacquet.

By the fifties, Buddy was established as a confident, reliable soloist, and his band was a reason to see Harlem. His recordings with Buck Clayton were spare and classic, his collaborations with Jimmy Rushing exuberant and inspired. Still, by the time he recorded *The Texas Twister*, in 1975, the cult of the new had virtually exiled him and banished his way of playing. Regularly touring Europe and Japan, he made Paris his center of activity. When Bill Weilbacher asked him to record for MJR, Tate had been recording almost exclusively in Europe--excepting the brilliant 1973 album *Buddy Tate and His Buddies* (Chiaroscuro), with Roy Eldridge, Illinois Jacquet, Mary Lou Williams, and arranger Buck Clayton.

The MJR session was also notable for teaming Buddy with Paul Quinichette (they later recorded together for Sonet) and encouraging Buddy to stretch out as a singer, paying homage to his great friend, Jimmy Rushing. The presence of Quinichette (1916-1983)--once dubbed "the Vice-Pres" for his affinity to the music of Lester Young--couldn't help but recall the dual tenors of the Basie band. Quinichette had retired from music in the early sixties, but after bringing his tenor to jam with pianist Brooks Kerr at an East Side bar one night in 1973, he began to perform again, intermittently, for the next few years. Cliff Smalls (born 1918), a versatile musician and superb bluesman, is a

veteran of both the big bands and rock-and-roll, as pianist, arranger, and trombonist; his chief associations range from Earl Hines and Lucky Millinder to Clyde McPhatter and Smokey Robinson. Major Holley and Jackie Williams were, then as now, among the most in-demand and responsive of rhythm players.

*The Texas Twister* is a relaxed, gently probing session; its several highlights begin with the title selection, a thirty-two-bar riff confection with a characteristically willful opening solo by Tate. His best playing on the date is heard on "Talk of the Town," a memorable example of his ability to invest a ballad with emotional generosity, melodic invention, and playfully rhythmic finesse, and on "Topsy," in which he follows the piano solo with a plaintive, wailing, yet impeccably shaped solo. Tate is a wonderfully evocative clarinetist (he's also a gifted flutist), though he hasn't played the instrument much on records; this album affords us two examples of his sensitive, woody approach to the clarinet, on "Chicago" and "Gee Baby" (both with buoyant solos by Quinichette). Though he isn't an especially accomplished vocalist, Buddy's slightly tremulous voice makes its pints, and when he erupts on "Boogie-Woogie" ("I may be wring..."), he manages some of Jimmy Rushing's punch. Also raising his voice in song is Major Holley, who demonstrates his patented method of vocalizing while playing arco bass on the second version of "Take Me Back Baby." This record was made in one afternoon—the product of old friends savoring jazz basics, and of a master musician recomposing himself. --- Gary Giddins

Gary Giddins covers jazz for *The Village Voice*. He is the founder and artistic director of the American Jazz Orchestra and the author, most recently, of *Celebrating Bird: The Triumph of Charlie Parker* (Beech Tree Books).

Publishers (all ASCAP):

*Talk of the Town*: Hallmark Music Co./World Music, Inc.

*Take Me Back Baby*: Bregman, Vocco & Conn

*Chicago*: Fisher Music Co.

*Boogie Woogie*: Bregman, Vocco & Conn

*Topsy*: Vanessa Music Corp.

*Gee Baby, Ain't I Good to You*: Michael H. Goldsen, Inc.

#### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

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McShann, Jay. *Going to Kansas City* (1972). New World 80358-2.

Rushing, Jimmy. *The Essential Jimmy Rushing* (1955). Vanguard 65/66.

Tate, Buddy. *Swinging Like Tate* (1958). Master Jazz-Felsted Series MJR 8127. Reissued (1986) Affinity AFF 171.

----. *Tate-a-Tate* (1960). Swingville 2014

----. *Kansas City Nights* (with Buck Clayton; 1960-1961). Prestige P-24040.

----. *Groovin' with Buddy Tate* (1961). Swingville 2029.

----. *Buddy Tate and His Buddies* (1973). Chiaroscuro 123.

----. *Hard Blowin'* (1978). Muse MR 5249.

----. *Just Jazz* (with Al Grey; 1984). Uptown UP 27.21.

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Woolley, Stan. "Tate-à-tête," *Jazz Journal*, February 1977, pp. 6, 41.

Buddy Tate, tenor saxophone, clarinet, vocals  
Paul Quinichette, tenor saxophone  
Cliff Smalls, piano  
Major Holley, bass  
Jackie Williams, drums

- 1- The Texas Twister (4:25)  
(Tate-Quinichette)
- 2- Talk of the Town (6:35)  
(Symes-Neiburg-Livingston)
- 3- Take Me Back Baby, Part One (3:52)  
(Basie-Rushing-Smith)
- 4- Take Me Back Baby, Part Two (4:50)  
(Basie-Rushing-Smith)
- 5- Chicago (7:02)  
(Fisher)
- 6- Boogie Woogie (3:53)  
(Basie-Rushing)
- 7- Topsy (6:12)  
(Battle-Durham)
- 8- Gee Baby, Ain't I Good to You (7:06)  
(Redman-Razaf)

This recording was previously available on LP as Master Jazz MJR 8128

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Engineer: Roger Rhodes  
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**NEW WORLD RECORDS**  
16 Penn Plaza #835  
NEW YORK, NY 10001-1820  
TEL 212.290-1680 FAX 212.290-1685  
Website: [www.newworldrecords.org](http://www.newworldrecords.org)  
email: [info@newworldrecords.org](mailto:info@newworldrecords.org)

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