

THE JIMMY RUSHING ALL STARS

New World Records 80530

Rereading the original liner notes for *Gee, Baby, Ain't I Good To You* now, thirty years later, I am struck by their matter-of-fact tone. Obviously, as I originally wrote them, I did not consider it unusual that jazz talent of the caliber performing on this CD were routinely available in New York City in 1967.

The big bands that had nurtured Jimmy Rushing, Dickie Wells, Julian Dash, Sir Charles Thompson, Buck Clayton, Jo Jones, and Eugene Ramey and their peers had disappeared in the late Forties and early Fifties. Many of their veterans—including all of the performers on this CD, had settled in and around New York. Some of them made a fair living with club dates and tours around the U.S. and Europe. Others took a day job and moonlighted playing jazz.

(All of the performers on this album, as I recollect, made a living out of jazz in the Sixties, except Julian Dash. Julian had a day job as a messenger at Merrill Lynch in downtown Manhattan, where he was known as "Dash," and took whatever jazz jobs he could get in the evenings and over the weekends.)

As a result, the jazz club scene in New York in those days was very exciting. One found out who was playing where on the Jazz Line—a jazz-information telephone line—or heard where so-and-so was playing from Ed Beach on his memorable two-hour live jazz radio show on WRVR. When one arrived at the club to hear, for example, Dickie Wells, the question always was, who would the sidemen be? One would know most of them from other evenings in other clubs or from records, and part of the fun was seeing them perform in a new context, live.

The important point was that so many of these men were there, in New York, their remarkable talents intact, playing around town, having fun and just being what they were—great jazz players. And, they would welcome the opportunity to record, available to any record producer who wanted to work with them. But, in fact, by the Sixties most of these men were not being recorded. Musical tastes had changed and the jazz world, or what came to pass for it, had moved on.

The only reason that Master Jazz Recordings came into existence was to give these remarkable musicians an opportunity to record, and to record with whom they wished, and to play the tunes they wanted to play.

Thus, Jimmy Rushing recruited the players for the jazz party from which this LP derives, not the producer. And Jimmy Rushing decided what songs would be performed at the jazz party, bringing with him from home a sheet of notebook paper on which he had jotted down song titles, referring to it as the evening proceeded.

Gee, Baby, Ain't I Good to You and its companion volume *Who Was It Sang That Song?* (New World 80510-2) reflect exactly this jazz scene in New York in the Sixties.

As the original liner notes relate, the source of all the music for this CD (and its New World companion) was a jazz party organized and sponsored by Master Jazz Recordings on October 30, 1967. If the original liner notes now sound matter-of-fact, it is only because I didn't then realize how lucky we all were to live with the New York jazz experience at that time.

Everything that the "Jimmy Rushing All-Stars" performed that night was recorded. The musicians played and the tapes rolled. In the original LP releases, a total of twelve tunes were included. There remained six other tunes which have now been added to the CD releases. Thus "Deed I Do," "Almost Home," and "Moten Stomp" were released on the CD version of *Who Was It Sang That Song?*. The final three tunes—"Tricks Ain't Walkin' No More," "One O'Clock Jump," and "I Ain't Got Nobody," are available on this CD for the first time.

Jimmy Rushing plays piano on "Tricks Ain't Walkin' No More," accompanied by Jo Jones on drums. This song was a favorite for Jimmy and a kind of specialty—the only time I ever heard him play the piano was when he was performing "Tricks." He would usually perform it in informal settings for friends at home, but rarely in public. He loved the lyrics and the opportunity they afforded him to sing in a falsetto voice. He especially enjoyed the collaboration with Jo Jones in this performance—it was a joy to watch the mutual pleasure of the two of them as they played off each other.

"One O'Clock Jump" is of, course, the venerable Basie instrumental—organized here, as so often with mainstream musicians—as a kind of loose format for successive soloists. The players didn't have to think much about "One O'Clock Jump" as such while performing it—its essential familiarity as a format permitted them to concentrate on their own solos, secure that everything would turn out all right—no surprises in sight.

In listening to this performance now, I think how typical it was of what and how these musicians and their peers used to play when they gathered in ad hoc groups around New York. The performance is casual, yet intense, and it shows these men exactly as they were—no hype, no hysteria, no compromise.

Finally, there is "I Ain't Got Nobody." It is at least the equal of all the other Rushing vocal performances on this CD, with strong solos from Dickie Wells, Julian Dash, and Buck Clayton. It shows Jimmy at ease with his peers and his peers at ease with Jimmy.

So here you have it—the second half of the jazz party with the Jimmy Rushing All-Stars from October 30, 1967.

I sometimes wonder whether we should have used this format again in later Master Jazz recordings. In fact we did not, and there are at least two reasons that we didn't.

One reason was that I couldn't imagine another group of musicians that could do it any better than the group assembled here.

Another reason was that we had originally developed the party idea for Jimmy Rushing. If we had to do it again it would have had to be with Jimmy. That never happened. What with one project and another, trying to develop the Master Jazz concept, the years went by and before we knew it, Jimmy was gone.

At least we have this wonderful memory of this talented, spontaneous, humble, warm, and deeply human being. I haven't met anyone like him since, and I doubt I will.

—Bill Weilbacher

Bill Weilbacher is president of Master Jazz Recordings.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Basic Beginnings: Benny Moten's Kansas City Orchestra. Bluebird 9768.

Blues and Things. Earl Hines and Jimmy Rushing. New World 80465-2.

The Essential Jimmy Rushing. Vanguard VCD 66/65.

Who Was It Sang That Song? The Jimmy Rushing All-Stars. New World 80510-2.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Basic, Count and Albert Murray. *Good Morning Blues.* New York, Random House, 1985.

Clayton, Buck and Nancy Miller Elliott. *Buck Clayton's Jazz World.* New York, Oxford University Press, 1987.

Ellison, Ralph. *Shadow and Act.* New York, Random House, 1964.

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GEE, BABY, AIN'T I GOOD TO YOU 80530-2 THE JIMMY RUSHING ALL STARS

- 1 Gee, Baby, Ain't I Good to You (Don Redman, Andy Razaf; publ. Michael H. Goldsen, Inc. and Razaf Music)
- 2 MJR Blues (James Rushing; publ. Bregman, Vocco & Conn)
- 3 Tricks Ain't Walkin' No More (James Rushing; publ. Warner Bros. Music Corp.)
- 4 St. James Infirmary (Irving Mills; publ. EMI Mills Catalog Publ.)

- 5 One O'Clock Jump (Count Basie; publ. EMI Feist Catalog)
- 6 Who's Sorry Now? (Bert Kalmar, Harry Ruby, and Ted Snyder; publ. EMI Mills Catalog Publ., Harry Ruby Music, and Ted Snyder)
- 7 These Foolish Things (Harry Link, Eric Maschwitz, and Jack Strachey; publ. Bourne Company and Boosey & Hawkes Inc.)
- 8 I Ain't Got Nobody (Spencer Williams)
- 9 Good Morning Blues (Count Basie, James Rushing, and Eddie Durham; publ. WB Music Corp. and Eddie Durham Swing Music)

All titles ASCAP

Jimmy Rushing, vocals, piano on *Tricks Ain't Walkin' No More*
Buck Clayton, trumpet
Dickie Wells, trombone
Julian Dash, tenor saxophone
Sir Charles Thompson, piano
Jo Jones, drums
Gene Ramey, bass

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