



LESTER YOUNG WITH COUNT BASIE

Classic Columbia, Okeh and Vocalion Lester Young with Count Basie (1936-1940)

MOSAIC BOX SET

In 1936, Vocalion issued a 78 RPM recording, "Shoe Shine Boy," b/w "Evenin'" under the name Jones-Smith Incorporated, a quintet from the Count Basie Orchestra that had been signed by Dave Kapp to an unfortunate contract before John Hammond could have signed them to the Columbia family of labels. However, Hammond who had been championing Basie in the jazz press, was able to record a small group taken from the Basie Orchestra prior to the Basie Orchestra's first Decca recordings.

I still recall the wonder and awe I had when I first encountered these recordings when included in Columbia's "The Lester Young Story Volume 1" about three decades ago. Basie's roller rink stride piano opens "Shoe Shine Boy," with Lester Young's entrance on sax immediately taking the spotlight. I think of Muhammed Ali's famous quote about himself, "Floats like a butterfly, stings like a bee," almost right on for Young who immediately takes over this performance with his feathering, yet full-bodied tone and his captivating solo. Carl Smith takes a short break and the rhythm of Walter Page on bass and Jo Jones on drums swing this hard.

Its one of those rare recordings that one cannot imagine anything being different, or better. The bluesy "Evenin'" with Jimmy Rushing's vocal is as enchanting with Young's tenor sax embellishing Rushing's vocal while Jones rides it on the cymbals while punctuating the performance on his snare drum. It was the beginning of the magical pairing of the two that commenced with this session, and lasted long after Young left the Basie Band.

Mosaic celebrates Young's time with Count Basie with this recently issued four CD collection, "Classic Columbia, Okeh and Vocalion Lester Young with Count Basie (1936-1940)." It includes the various small group sessions by Young while with Basie, including Basie's Bad Boys, an octet with Basie on organ for "Goin' to Chicago," as well as the lively "I Ain't Got Nobody," with Basie's piano still exhibiting its stride origins but a bit more sparse in its attack before Young enters on clarinet, and later takes a turn on tenor.

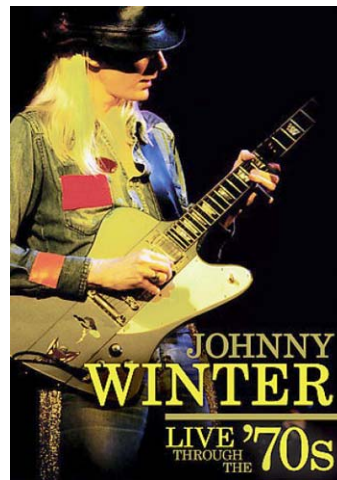
On the first Columbia Big Band session, Young contributed one of most memorable compositions, "Taxi War Dance," a hot romp based on the chords of the ballad

"Willow Weep For Me," opening with Young at his most incisive as he also quotes "Old Man River here before solos by Dickie Wells and Buddy Tate (who trades fours with the band. There are other gems such as a big band rendition of "Evenin'" and Young's classic solo on "Tickle Toe." Then there are the small group sessions with organist Glenn Hardman, Count Basie's Kansas City Seven (which produced the classic "Dickie's Dream" and "Lester Leaps In"), and with Benny Goodman and Charlie Christian joining Basie, Young and the ALL American Rhythm Section, that remained unissued until the seventies appearing on a Jazz Archive LP. Even with some of the sub par material, the few moments of a Young solo enliven the performance.

Mosaic has not presented this material in chronological order, mixing sessions to make this a more listenable product. Additionally, previously issued tracks are presented at the beginning of each CD with the last tracks of each disc containing the alternate takes. Mosaic's booklet has full discographical information and Loren Schoenberg's liner notes on Young and the recordings is exemplary with many rare photographs to add to one's pleasure.

This set contains some classic and highly influential music, and Lester Young's recordings with Count Basie should be in any jazz collection. With Mosaic's excellent presentation this edition of those recordings is highly recommended. Is available from Mosaic's website, <http://www.mosaicrecords.com>, or you can call 203-327-7111, Monday through Friday from 9 AM - 5 PM EST. The catalog number for this set is Mosaic 239, and it is a limited edition of 5,000 copies.

Ron Weinstock



JOHNNY WINTER

Live Through The '70s

MVD VISUAL DVD

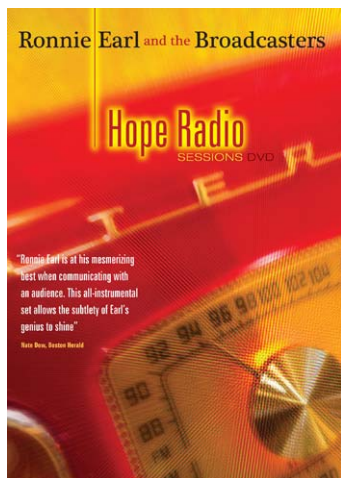
Back in '69 the quote went something like this- "the next big blues star will be a white man...a *very very* white man." So went the initial buzz on Johnny Winter and a number of nifty snapshots of those early years of stardom for the snow-maned Texas guitar legend are to be found on this tasty program. Featured are partial sets from Winter's first post-regional lineup- which also included his brother Edgar, then a junior partner on sax and keyboards, the more rock-oriented trio that followed plus an all-star jam lineup.

The solid numbers by the first group, sometimes referred to simply as Winter, allude to a potential never fully realized, most likely due to Edgar's own ambition as a solo artist. That foursome, heard here working out on Edgar's hit-to-be instrumental "Frankenstein" as well as tunes from Johnny's blues "book", may have taken a very interesting musical path given a bit more time. The rock trio (Randy Jo Hobbs- bass, Richard Hughes- drums) is featured on vintage footage from the *Don Kirshner's Rock*

Concert TV series, delivering a solid run-through of “Rock and Roll Hoochie Koo”.

Winter’s guitar work shines throughout but the high point of the disc is the 1974 *Soundstage* performance also featuring Mike Bloomfield, Dr. John, Junior Wells and Buddy Miles. While he found an authentic rock voice, Winter has always seemed more at home with the blues; this “celebrity” version of “Walkin’ In The Park” provides the evidence. This disc is a ‘must’ for serious Winter fans.

Duane Verh



RONNIE EARL Hope Radio Sessions STONY PLAIN DVD

Stony Plain has just issued this DVD by Ronnie Earl & the Broadcasters, which was filmed and recorded at Wellford Sound in Acton, Massachusetts in April 2007. On these two all instrumental blues sessions, Earl’s guitar is backed by Dave Lumina on piano and Hammond organ, Jim Mouradian on bass and Lorne

Entress on drums, with special guests, guitarist Nick Adams, and Michael ‘Mudcat’ Ward on bass and keyboards. Earl has had an extraordinary career, first coming to notice as the guitarist with Sugar Ray & the BlueTones who I saw in 1978 backing J.B. Hutto in New York City.

I picked up an EP by the group that included Earl featured on an Earl Hooker instrumental that quickly had one observe his tone and musical imagination. He also had a productive spell in Roomful of Blues, replacing Duke Robillard, before taking the lead with his Broadcasters with whom he backed a number of terrific blues singers and legends. Musically, one can hear a diverse group of influences including Robert Lockwood, Otis Rush, Earl Hooker and Johnny Heartsman. What is noteworthy about all of them is the attention to tone and nuances in all their playing, and Earl’s music has always focused on subtle musical invention as opposed to simply banging out hard rocking blues solos. And in recent years, his music has become jazzier.

Handling substance abuse and other issues, Earl turned to faith and his music perhaps is a bit more introverted, although he still can get down and get funky as the mood suits him. The Introduction by the Reverend Deborah J. Blanchard mentions getting to know Ronnie and how his music has the gift of being able to touch and soothe the soul.

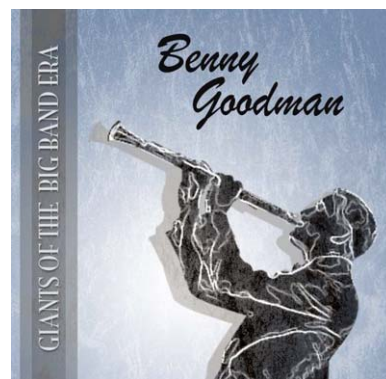
Certainly at times on this video his guitar and backing band do just that. He opens his performances here with a jazzy “Bobby’s Bop,” with a nice groove and some jazz-inflected playing, before he launches into the moody “Blues For the Homeless.” He gets into a funky groove for “Eddie’s Gospel Groove,” where he calls to the audience to get up and move, before two moody slow blues instrumentals, “I Am With You,” and “Kay My Dear.” “New Gospel Tune,” opens with some evocative churchy piano from Lumina to

set the mood.

The second evening’s performances opens with Earl playing some charged Otis Rush-styled guitar, with Mudcat on bass and Nick Adams on second guitar. It is followed by “Blues For the West Side,” which was an instrumental originally recorded by Magic Sam, whose playing Earl evokes without imitating, and on which Mudcat guests on keyboards. It is followed by a solo “Lightnin’ Hopkins Thing.” Also included is an interview with Stony Plain’s Holger Petersen and then an abbreviated, skeletal rendition of the traditional “I Shall Not Be Moved.”

I found that the lack of a vocalist or horns made the performances best sampled in batches as opposed to straight through, although others might disagree. Earl often does reach the heart with the playing here. The video production is excellent, following the keep it simple school that focuses on the performers and performances and realizes that this is not for MTV, but for fans of blues, jazz and Ronnie Earl. Well worth checking out by his fans and fans of blues guitar.

Ron Weinstock



BENNY GOODMAN Giants of the Big Band Era ACROBAT MUSIC GROUP

Tagged as the official “The King of Swing,” Chicago-born bandleader/clarinetist Benny Goodman (1909—1986) dominated popular dance music, appeared in movies, made numerous recordings, and toured widely.

Goodman formed his own large dance band in 1934 and their driving sound and ‘hot’ style, enhanced by Fletcher Henderson’s arrangements, made them the most popular dance band in the USA. The 18 tracks on this CD compilation were recorded between 1935 and 1946 and include many of hit singles, such as “Body And Soul,” “After You’ve Gone,” “Sometimes I’m Happy,” “King Porter Stomp,” “Sing, Sing, Sing (With Swing),” “Perfidia,” “Blue Skies,” “Jersey Bounce,” and others. Goodman’s fluid, crisp clarinet playing is featured throughout and the orchestra arrangements, splendid soloists and tight section work, demonstrate why Goodman’s swinging band has enjoyed such long-lasting popularity.

The eight-page liner booklet, which contains the history of Goodman and his band, mentions some of the band members, but track listings don’t give details on soloist names. Still, big band fans should enjoy the nearly 60 minutes of spectacular music touted in accompanying press materials as an “introduction” to Goodman’s vast discography. Also, this disc would be a possible place for novice jazz fans to begin exploration of the Swing era and, with that in mind, would make a very nice gift.

Nancy Ann Lee