



Chris Barber - Can't Stop Now

MVD Audio, 2008

Review by Joe Milliken

For over 50 years British trombonist Chris Barber has certainly left a colorful impression on both jazz and blues as the leader of several groups including the Chris Barber Jazz Band, the Barber Jazz and Blues Band and his current Barber Big Band.

Barber's latest release titled *Can't Stop Now*, represents a 2007 European tour featuring his Big Band, with a special guest vocal appearance from Andy Fairweather Low, who briefly toured with the band.

The title is appropriate, for Barber and musical partner trumpeter Pat Halcox have been recording and touring together since 1954, and they even informally played together before that. That sure is a lot of time to develop a groove with a fellow musician!

The live disc also introduces two new players into the mix with Joe Farler on guitar and banjo and Mike Snelling on reeds, adding a new dimension to several tracks including a new arrangement of the Duke Ellington standard "Hot and Bothered".

Other tracks include the Barber originals "Music From The Land Of Dreams" and the medley "French Quarter Cadenza," plus another interesting treatment on the Ellington composition "C-Jam Blues". The CD also represents the last recordings with bassist Vic Pitt, who retired from touring shortly after the tour. The three tracks featuring the aforementioned Fairweather Low are also noted highlights.

Although "Can't Stop Now" represents the documentation of a pristine and very important jazz band, the overall sound of the recording does leaves a little to be desired. However that is just a blip on the radar screen as compared to the continued musicianship and professionalism of Chris Barber and friends. Contact Joe Milliken at www.jemwriting.com