

Gene Ammons  
**Meet The Boss**  
(Acrobat)

Gene Ammons (1925-74) always had a big, distinctive and soulful sound on the tenor. He came of age during the bebop era when he was a key soloist with the Billy Eckstine Orchestra and Woody Herman's Second Herd. The tenor began leading his own record dates in 1947 and his distinctive tone was immediately recognizable from the start.

The 1950s were Ammons' busiest period. He recorded bebop, blues, r&bish; pieces, jump tunes, warm ballads, and jam session albums with equal success. The two-CD set *Meet The Boss* (which is subtitled "The Singles & Albums Collection 1950-53") has 49 of the 67 selections that Ammons led during this three-year period. Most of the performances (ideal for jukeboxes) clock in under three minutes so the solos of Ammons' sidemen are brief, but the tenor shows that he could get his message across quickly and quite effectively. He caressed ballads, was rollicking on the riff-filled originals, and made every note count.

A few of the selections that Ammons recorded as co-leader of a group with his good friend Sonny Stitt (heard on tenor and his rarely played baritone) are included. There is one error in that this version of their popular "Blues Up And Down" is actually an incomplete alternate take instead of the master. But the inclusion of the two-part "Stringing The Blues" compensates.

Drawn from the Prestige, Chess, United and Decca catalogs, this twofer serves as a fine sampler of Gene Ammons during a specific period of his career. Whether performing a ballad version of "Pennies From Heaven," introducing the future standard "Walkin'," uplifting "La Vie En Rose," swinging on "Back In Your Own Backyard," reviving his early hit "Red Top," or battling Sonny Stitt to a tie, Gene Ammons is heard throughout in his early prime.

*Meet The Boss* is available from [www.mvd.com](http://www.mvd.com) [www.mvdb2b.com](http://www.mvdb2b.com).

- Scott Yanow