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Joe Turner – Big Joe Rides Again – Speakers Corner Records

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by Audiophile Audition | Dec 4, 2019 | Jazz CD Reviews, SACD & Other Hi-Res Reviews | 0 comments

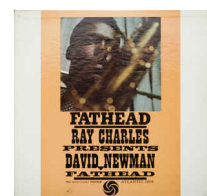
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Joe Turner – Big Joe Rides Again – Atlantic Records 1332 (1960)/Speakers Corner Records (2017) 180-gram stereo vinyl, 40:57 **1/2:**



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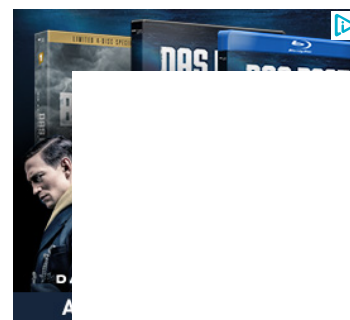
(Joe Turner – vocals; Ernie Wilkins – conductor, arrangements; Ernie Royal – trumpet; Vic Dickenson – trombone; Jerome Richardson – alto saxophone; Coleman Hawkins – tenor saxophone; Jimmy Jones – piano; Jim Hall – guitar; Doug Watkins – bass; Charlie Persip – drums; Paul Ricard – trumpet; Jimmy Nottingham – trumpet; Lawrence Brown – trombone; Pete Brown – alto saxophone; Seldon Powell – tenor saxophone; Pete Johnson – piano; Freddie Greene – guitar; Walter Page – bass; Cliff Leeman – drums)

Big Joe Turner was a blues icon and pioneer of rock and roll. He was described as a *blues shouter* and electrified the music world with his 1954 recording, “Shake Rattle And Roll” (of course, Bill Haley and The Comets had a more successful single). According to songwriter Doc Pomus, there wouldn’t have been rock and roll without Big Joe. Turner was an early star at Atlantic Records. Despite his initial efforts in the emerging crossover r & b market, Turner would spend most of his career with jazz combos. But he will be remembered for songs like “Corinna, Corinna”, “Midnight Special”, “Flip Flop And Fly”, “Chains Of Love”, Honey Hush” and “Roll ‘Em Pete”. He was posthumously enshrined in *The Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame* in 1987.

Speakers Corner Records has released a 180-gram vinyl re-mastering of *Big Joe Rides Again*. First recorded in 1960, this was a living testament to the r & b prowess of Atlantic Records. Turner is backed by a bona fide Who’s Who of session players, arranged by Ernie Wilkins. Side One opens with “Switchin’ In The Kitchen”. This feels like a combination of big band jazz and jump swing. There are solos by Coleman Hawkins (tenor saxophone), Jerome Dickerson (alto saxophone). Vic Dickenson (trombone) and Ernie Royal (trumpet). Turner’s uncanny vocal phrasing is magnetic. “Nobody In Mind” (one of four Turner compositions) is a sultry arrangement with straight ahead blues resonance. Dickenson’s muted trombone distills the nasty low-down vibe of this number. A lot of the orchestration has a distinctive jazzy swagger. The clever wordplay of “Until The Real Thing Comes Along” is a perfect vehicle for Big Joe’s “Cab Calloway” showmanship. Hawkins adds deep shade with his tenor to provide additional texture to this earnest love song. A sparkling introduction that is worthy of Duke Ellington or Count Basie kicks off “I Get The Blues When It Rains”. Jerome Dickerson shines on alto. Turner’s confident voice is front and center, but he shares the spotlight with the instrumentalists. “Rebecca” (by far the longest album track, clocking in at 7:05) is perhaps the ensemble’s finest performance. This is classic blues with repeat first verse lines. The up tempo jam is anchored by Jones’ muscular, soulful piano runs. There is a trumpet solo with hot licks and an interesting saxophone counterpoint. Turner’s innate talent for phrase turning (“You so




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beautiful, but you gotta die someday") is legendary, classic blues.

Side Two gets off to a rousing start with "When I Was Young". There is a catchy group vamp with punctuated tempo stops. The sparkling arrangement includes voice trading off with trumpet and saxophone. Turner's colorful lyrics are memorable as is the trombone solo. "Don't You Make Me High" is a blues classic. With swaying resonance, overt sexuality is enhanced by muted trombone and gritty piano. The selection of two well known pop tunes is a surprise. "Time After Time" (written by the incomparable team of June Styne & Sammy Cahn) has mixed results. Coleman Hawkins captures the whimsical jazz balladry on tenor, but the gruff style of Turner is not the best match. On "Pennies From Heaven" Turner successfully embraces the jazzy inflections and overall jauntiness. Fittingly, "Here Comes Your Icemen" is vintage Turner. With a dirge-like, hypnotic instrumental foundation (reminiscent of "St. Louis Blues"), the anecdotal cheeky blues narrative is unforgettable. It features Big Joe Turner at his finest.

Speakers Corner Records 180-gram vinyl re-mastering is phenomenal. The stereo separation of this sixty-year-old recording is flawless. With Turner's smoky voice centered in the mix, the reeds and horns are rendered with both clarity and mellowness. This vinyl pressing is immaculate with limited surface noise.

TrackList:

Side One: Switchin' In The Kitchen; Nobody In Mind; Until The Real Thing Comes Along; I Get The Blues When It Rains; Rebecca

Side Two: When I Was Young; Don't You Make Me High; Time After Time; Pennies From Heaven; Here Comes Your Iceman

—Robbie Gerson



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