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## Charles Mingus – Mingus Oh Yeah – Speakers Corner Records

by Audiophile Audition | Feb 1, 2022 | Jazz CD Reviews, SACD & Other Hi-Res Reviews | 0 comments



Speakers Corner Records kicks off 2022 with a re-mastered vinyl of an under-appreciated Charles Mingus 1962 recording.

### Charles Mingus – Mingus Oh Yeah – Atlantic Records SD 1377 (1962)/Speakers Corner Records (2022) 180-gram stereo vinyl, 44:08 \*\*\*\*1/2:

Charles Mingus – piano, vocals; Booker Ervin – tenor saxophone; Roland Kirk – flute, tenor saxophone, siren, manzello, stritch ; Jimmy Knepper – trombone; Doug Watkins – double bass; Dannie Richmond – drums)

When you created an album like *Mingus Ah Um*, it is nearly impossible to replicate the commercial and artistic impact. Like Miles Davis (*Kind Of Blue*), John Coltrane (*Giant Steps*) and Ornette Coleman (*The Shape Of Jazz To Come*), any future projects would ultimately be compared to previous groundbreaking



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releases. To underscore the confidence and diverse musical vision of Charles Mingus, he surprised the jazz scene with the 1962 Atlantic Records 1962 album, *Mingus Oh Yeah*. On this album, he didn't play double bass at all, instead choosing to perform on piano and contribute vocals to 3 tracks. This high-spirited amalgam of jazz, blues and gospel was an unusual departure from the moody and at times serious melancholy of his previous work.

Speakers Corner Records has released a re-mastered 180-gram vinyl of *Mingus Oh Yeah*. Featuring multi-instrumentalist Roland Kirk (woodwinds, percussion); Booker Ervin (tenor saxophone); Jimmy Knepper (trombone) and the rhythm section of Doug Watkins (double bass) and Dannie Richmond (drums), this is an interesting change of pace for this jazz icon. Side A opens with the roadhouse swagger of "Hog Callin' Blues". With Mingus laying down some thick piano chords, he exhorts the band. Ervin and Kirk take turns exchanging urgent, white-hot licks on saxophone as Knepper makes the most of his trombone riffs (with and without a mute). It is an intense blues jam with free jazz intonation. Slowing things down, Mingus' arrangement on "Devil Woman" is a late-night, straight forward blues translation. A counterpoint with staccato piano and sultry tenor leads into a gorgeous piano solo that has brilliant phrasing. He plays against saxophone with dexterity and innate feel. Knepper's sinewy run is evocative, and the ending integrates the whole ensemble. On the hard-charging Monk tribute "Wham Bam, Thank You Ma'am", Mingus executes *hard bop* with edgy, near-atonal saxophone riffs by Kirk and Ervin who play together and complement the polyrhythmic jam.

There is a decidedly earthy and soulful undercurrent to the seven tracks on *Mingus Oh Yeah*. The slow-burning intensity that pervades "Ecclesiastics" is gospel-driven. There are slower movements including an understated piano solo. But there are also up tempo swing transitions with articulate orchestration and accelerated time signature. It always returns to deliberate blues-laden motifs. In another low-key blues translation ("Oh Lord Don't Let Them Drop That Atomic Bomb On Me"), Mingus and his band seem to channel blues pioneers like W.C. Handy. The harmonic reed/horn accents provide texture and deeply rooted emotion to the processional number. Renowned for somber contexts, he breezes through the accessible, comical "Eat That Chicken". Possibly a tribute to Fats Waller, the instrumentation (with a funky bounce tempo) has old-time, raucous dynamics featuring a downright nasty trombone. This could be the most structured arrangement on the album. For anyone looking for the abstract side of Mingus, the finale "Passions Of A Man" more than meets this expectation. There are complex free-form instrumentals and stream-of-consciousness spoken word musings, all captured with a turbulent, foreboding resonance that is compelling and unsettling.

Speakers Corner Records has done an excellent job in remastering *Mingus Oh Yeah* to 180-gram vinyl. All of the various instrument tonality is represented vibrantly, including piercing saxophone, bass piano notation and fluid trombone. The stereo separation is excellent.

#### TrackList:

##### Side A:

Hog Callin' Blues;  
Devil Woman;  
Wham Bam, Thank You Ma'am

##### Side B:

Ecclesiastics;  
Oh Lord Don't Let Them Drop That Atomic Bomb On Me;  
Eat That Chicken;  
Passions Of A Man

—Robbie Gerson

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