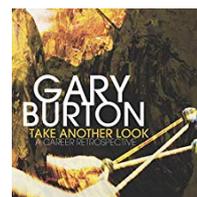


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Sonny Stitt – Stitt Plays Bird – Speakers Corner

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Sonny Stitt – Stitt Plays Bird – Speakers Corner LP 180 gram vinyl released May 2017 (Original release 1963-Atlantic Records SD 1418) 35:46****



(Sonny Stitt – alto sax; John Lewis – piano; Jim Hall – guitar; Richard Davis – bass; Connie Kay – drums)



For those listeners who may have missed out on the LP *Stitt Plays Bird*

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,when it was first released in 1963, now is your chance to rectify that oversight. Deliciously re-mastered by the German label Speakers Corner Records to bring out the full dynamics and sonic delight of the stereo recording, you are treated to Sonny Stitt and his be-bop cohorts run through eight Charlie Parker originals and one by Jay McShann (in whose band Parker was first employed).

Additionally, the liner notes are by Ira Gitler (who died on February 23, 2019, at 90) and was one of the most respected jazz writers of the post war era as well as an early believer in be-bop music. Finally the album cover is a portrait of Stitt by noted American painter Marvin Israel, which is so flawlessly reproduced it could be suitable for framing.

The musicians surrounding Stitt, are anchored by two stalwarts of the Modern Jazz Quartet, pianist John Lewis and drummer Connie Kay plus one of tastiest guitarists in jazz Jim Hall, and the big toned bassist Richard Davis.

Much has been made about the influence that Charlie Parker had on the playing of Sonny Stitt. Although there was a closeness in style, and some of Stitt's early solo work may have had some note for note Parker comparisons, Stitt was his own man, developing his own creativity and phrasing. The opening track on Side One is "Ornithology" which is based on *How High The Moon* and a close listening may pick up some early Parker mannerisms. Guitarist Jim Hall has a glorious solo on this number.



Sonny Stitt, by Tom Marcello

"Scrapple From The Apple" uses chord changes from *Honeysuckle Rose* with Hall and Stitt covering the line on both the introduction and the out chorus to the number. In between Stitt is both agile and aglow throughout his solo space.

"Parker's Mood" is a slow blues on which Stitt is expressive and sure-footed. Pianist John Lewis, who had been involved with several prior recordings of the number including Parker's original outing, offers ideal rapport that is both empathetic and lyrical.

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If you listen closely as Side Two opens with "Ko-Ko" the changes of Ray Noble's *Cherokee* are on full display. Stitt takes the number at full gallop and he does not give up the reins throughout the piece.

Another all Stitt offering is "Confirmation" which has become a bebop standard. Filled with an array of complex and rapid chord changes, this composition is not for the faint of heart. Stitt never backed away from a challenge and he tackled the opportunity with his assertive style and cool-headed technical facility.

When Parker was in Jay McShann's band in the early 1940s, they recorded one of McShann's compositions "Hootie Blues". Stitt's interpretation is of the low-down blues variety and he sets the stage accordingly. Pianist Lewis, guitarist Hall, and bassist Davis are moved to add to the suggestive slow-burn attractiveness of the number.

Be-bop is spoken here.

TrackList:

Side One:

Ornithology

Scrapple From The Apple

My Little Suede Shoes

Parker's Mood

Au Privave

Side Two:

Ko-Ko

Confirmation

Hootie Blues

Constellation

—Pierre Giroux

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[April 2019](#)

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