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The Art Farmer Quartet – Live At The Half Note – Speakers Corner

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by Audiophile Audition | Apr 21, 2020 | [Jazz CD Reviews](#), [SACD & Other Hi-Res Reviews](#) | 0 comments

The Art Farmer Quartet – Live At The Half Note – Atlantic Records 1421 (1964)/Speakers Corner Records (2010), 37:26 **1/2:**

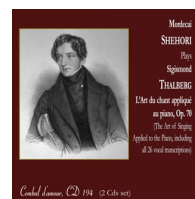
(Art Farmer – flugelhorn; Jim Hall – guitar; Steve Swallow – double bass; Walter Perkins – drums)



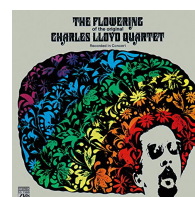
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Like many emerging trumpet players in the post WW II music scene, Art Farmer was inspired by *bebop*. By his own admission, he was not entirely geared toward instrumental virtuosity and speed. Farmer's vision for his trumpet play was tonality and sound. His first big break came with Lionel Hampton's orchestra in 1952. He shared trumpet duties with Clifford Brown, Quincy Jones and Benny Bailey. His first recording as a band leader was the 1954 LP, *Art Farmer Septet* (featuring arrangements by Quincy Jones and Gigi Gryce). As a sideman, Farmer collaborated with Horace Silver, Gerry Mulligan, Thelonious Monk and Charles Mingus. His versatility and improvisational skills were enhanced by "experimental" work with composer Edgar Varese (1957). He formed an iconic sextet with Benny Golson that included McCoy Tyner. Additionally, he put together a trio and quartet that featured guitarist Jim Hall. In pursuit of his aesthetic musical vision, Farmer began exploring the flugelhorn. He was uniquely responsible for its ascension in the jazz world. Additionally, he pioneered the hybrid "flumpet". The dedication to lyricism and warmth defined Farmer for the rest of his career.

Speakers Corner Records has released a 180-gram re-mastered vinyl of *The Art Farmer Quartet - Live At The Half Note*. Jazz artists have been inspired by live performance, and this album is no exception. Recorded with Jim Hall (guitar), Steve Swallow (double bass) and Walter Perkins (drums), five accessible numbers are explored with unique Art Farmer musical aesthetics. Side One opens with the perennial standard "Stompin' At The Savoy". The tribute to the Harlem club has been recorded by Chick Webb, Benny Goodman and Art Tatum among many. Hall, Swallow and Perkins implement a small ensemble resonant tempo. Farmer enters with his customary lyrical translation and glowing tonality. As the main theme is established, Farmer and Hall communicate in adroit counterpoint. Swallow's skipping double bass lines are propulsive and he and Perkins are very cohesive. Hall's extended solo is wildly improvisational, but with restrained precision. He straddles hot licks and trio interaction like a pianist. It is an inventive take on the vintage jazz touchstone. Up next, dual flugelhorn/guitar lead kicks off Miles Davis' "Swing Spring". Farmer percolates in a near bebop frenzy with the rhythm section in tight support. Hall delivers a solo with nuanced phrasing and descending runs. Perkins executes a gritty, syncopated drum solo. Art returns with stylish trills and sustained momentum.

Side Two boasts three reinvented popular standards. "What's New" began as a big band piece for Bob Crosby. It was subsequently recorded by Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, John Coltrane and Dexter Gordon, and ultimately as a centerpiece to Linda Ronstadt's first album



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with Nelson Riddle. Here, Farmer plays with a sultry resonance that distills the melancholy. His runs are articulate and expressive. Another pop ditty "I Want To Be Happy" (from the 1925 play, *No No Nanette*) was captured with jazzy intonation by Ella Fitzgerald (with Chick Webb) in 1937. Farmer and the quartet flat out swing with chord modulations and catchy, halting rhythm patterns. His fluidity is showcased with vibrato-infused technique. Hall excels with a racing solo before Framer joins in the big finish. In a surprise, Farmer sits out the finale, "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You". This beloved song was Tommy Dorsey's band signature. After a moody introduction, Hall hits a mid-tempo groove with an eloquent flow of chords and notation. He is able to reign in distortion from his amplified guitar. A deft, bluesy tempo shift at the end is artful.

Speakers Corner Records has done a superb job in re-mastering *The Art Farmer Quartet - Live At The Half Note* to 180-gram vinyl. The stereo separation (and it is highly recommended to listen with a good pair of stereo headphones) is flawless. The integrity of the original Atlantic Records sound engineering mix is intact (including audience chatter). For a live session, there is an exceptional amount of finely tuned auditory detail. The flugelhorn is mellow and expansive.

TrackList:

Side One:

Stompin' At The Savoy

Swing Spring

Side Two:

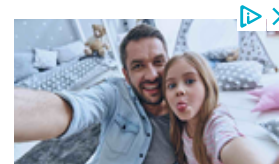
What's New

I Want To Be Happy

I'm Getting Sentimental Over You

—Robbie Gerson

Speakers Corner issues a sparkling re-mastered vinyl of a live set by Art Farmer.



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