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## Ry Cooder – Jazz – Speakers Corner Records

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by Audiophile Audition | Jan 13, 2020 | [Jazz CD Reviews](#), [SACD & Other Hi-Res Reviews](#) | 0 comments

### Ry Cooder – Jazz – Warner Bros. Records BSK 3197 (1978)/Speakers Corner Records (2019) 180-gram stereo vinyl, 37:50 \*\*\*\*\*:



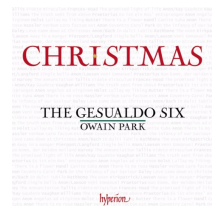
Ry Cooder is renowned for a variety of musical influences and styles. He gained some critical attention for playing guitar with Captain Beefheart on *Safe As Milk*. In the late 60's and 70's he became a vital session musician for prominent artists. This included Randy Newman (*12 Songs*), The Rolling Stones (*Let It Bleed*, *Sticky Fingers*) and Little Feat (*Willin'*). The list is voluminous and includes John Lee Hooker, Maria Muldaur, Neil Young, Arlo Guthrie, Linda Ronstadt, James Taylor, Warren Zevon and The Doobie Brothers among many others. He was part of the historic *Jamming With Edward*, joining Mick Jagger, Charlie Watts and Nicky Hopkins. Beginning with the 1970 film, *Performance*, Cooder worked on 18 film scores and notably collaborated on *Buena Vista Social Club*. His solo career has spanned five decades and consists of a wide variety of roots-based music in various formats.

It certainly came as no surprise in 1978 that Ry Cooder would take an excursion into jazz. With a powerhouse, eclectic group of musicians, *Ry Cooder – Jazz* embraced vintage jazz and traditional music. Speakers Corner Records has released a re-mastered 180-gram vinyl. Cooder's uncompromising distillation of vintage Americana jazz is inspiring in its ambition and scope. Joseph Byrd's arrangements are precise and showcase the impeccable musicianship. Side I opens with the 1924 Milton Yager/Jack Yellen social musing, "Big Bad Bill Is Sweet William Now". This number has been recorded by a wide array of artists including Peggy Lee, Merle Haggard and even Van Halen. Cooder's distinctive acoustic guitar initiates a Dixieland swing. The formidable horn section blends in seamlessly. A saucy trombone (Randy Aldcroft) precedes a bottleneck run, cornet (Mario Guarneri) and stride-like piano (John Rodby). Jazz is connected to many other American musical genres. "Face To Face" is pure country-infused gospel. There are tonal shades with a baritone horn (George Bohannon) and tuba (Red Callender) that lead a processional flow. David Lindley (on mandobanjo) complements Cooder's outstanding guitar work as the song ends in an aspirational tempo shift. It's all Ry Cooder on "The Pearls/Tia Juana" medley which interprets Jelly Roll Morton with guitar and mandolin. The timing and phrasing is flawless. A transition to Mexican folk-infused jazz is accentuated with harp. It is texture on texture in a virtuosic performance. An early ragtime song, "Dream" was closely associated with a very young Eubie Blake. Here jazz icon Earl Hines lends his deft talents to this easy shuffle. Tom Collier adds a vampy marimba. When Cooder injects

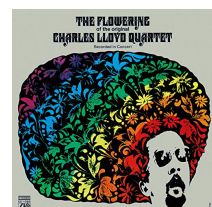
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bottleneck, it gently sways with an Island-ish rhythm. Hines finishes up with a dose of mood and soul. Revisiting traditional music, "Happy Meeting In Glory" is a song that inspired Bahamian guitarist Joseph Spence. Originally a hymnal, here it is re-arranged in 3/4 time. Cooder (guitar) and Lindley (mandolin) are a perfect match. Bohannon's gliding trombone is atmospheric and the horns chorus embraces the religious context.

Side II covers 3 Bix Beiderbecke tunes. "In A Mist" was first recorded in 1927 with Paul Whiteman. Here Cooder is backed by alto (Harvey Pittel), and bass clarinet (David Sherr) with vibraphone (Tom Collier) and bass (Tom Pedrini). Tempo adjustments and punctuation are compelling. A second composition that Beiderbecke recorded on piano, "Flashes", is performed on solo guitar. Cooder's erudite technique embraces the melody with intimacy. "Davenport Blues" is classic Beiderbecke with a jaunty, rolling presence. Collier adds some rhythmic backbone on vibraphone. This has a shimmering quintet arrangement. Cooder revisits Tin Pan Alley on the Ford Dabney/Cecil Mack number, "Shine". The vocal standard has been recorded by The Mills Brothers and Bing Crosby. Cooder's winsome vocals kick off this one before an adroit swing break. A terrific vocal quartet (reminiscent of Paul Whiteman's Rhythm Boys) adds nuanced feeling. A certain highlight is Bert Williams' "Nobody". First released as vaudeville in 1906, this cover begins with a Sunday morning chant. Cooder returns with the vocal quartet in an internal "talking/singing" dialogue. The harmonies are riveting. The finale, "We Shall be Happy" is another spiritual rendered in acoustic splendor.

Speakers Corner has done a superlative job in re-mastering *Ry Cooder - Jazz* to 180-gram vinyl. The sound mix is excellent. All of the acoustic stringed instruments are vibrant and precise. Horn tonality is mellow without any overt shrillness. Byrd's arrangements are concise and envelop the conceptual vision of the album. The hi-gloss album packaging is top-notch, as is the reproduction of the bright red graphics and lettering centered in black.

#### Musicians:

Ry Cooder – guitar, bottleneck guitar, mandolin, tiple, vocals; Mario Guarneri – cornet; Randy Aldcroft – trombone; Harvey Pittel – alto saxophone; Pat Rizzo – alto saxophone; Bill Hood – bass saxophone; I John Rodby – piano; Mark Stevens – drums; Stuart Brotman – cymbalum; David Lindley – mandobanjo, mandolin; Barbara Starkey – pump organ; Red Callender – tuba; George Bohanon – baritone horn; Oscar Brashear – cornet; Earl Hines – piano; Chuck Domanico – bass; Tom Collier – marimba; David Sherr – bass clarinet, clarinet; Tom Pedrini – bass; Willie Schwartz – clarinet; Chuck Berghoffer – bass; Quartet: Jimmy Adams, Bill Johnson; Simon Pico Payne; Cliff Givens; Joseph Byrd – arrangements, conductor

#### TrackList:

##### Side 1:

Big Bad Bill Is Sweet William Now  
Face To Face That I Shall Meet Him  
The Pearls/ Tia Juana  
The Dream  
Happy Meeting In Glory

##### Side 2:

In A Mist  
Flashes  
Davenport Blues  
Shine  
Nobody  
We Shall Be Happy

—Robbie Gerson

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