

Anita O'Day – All The Sad Young Men (1961)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Boogie Blues* 3:48 2. *You Came A Long Way From St. Louis* 4:16 3. *I Want To Sing A Song* 2:44 4. *A Woman Alone With The Blues* 3:20 5. *The Ballad Of The Sad Young Men* 4:27 [play](#) 6. *Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me* 4:10 7. *One More Mile* 2:42 8. *Night Bird* 4:00 9. *Up State* 2:32 10. *Senor Blues* 2:45 [play](#) Personnel: Anita O'Day: Vocals; The Gary McFarland Orchestra: Gary McFarland (conductor, arranger); Walter Levinsky, Phil Woods (alto saxophone, clarinet); Jerome Richardson, Zoot Sims (tenor saxophone); Bernie Glow, Doc Severinsen, Herb Pomeroy (trumpet); Billy Byers, Willie Dennis (trombone); Bob Brookmeyer (valve trombone); Hank Jones (piano); Barry Galbraith (guitar); George Duvivier (bass); Mel Lewis (drums).

From her days with Gene Krupa and Stan Kenton in the '40s, Anita O'Day was a genuine jazz singer who could make the most of a big-band date. This 1961 recording pairs her with arranger Gary McFarland, who was just beginning to demonstrate his talent for creating constantly shifting backdrops filled with unexpected rhythmic figures and voicings. The title song and Willard Robson's "A Woman Alone with the Blues" gain orchestral dimension from McFarland's writing, while he's able to put his own stamp on Ellington's "Do Nothin' Till You Hear from Me." The songs are well-chosen vehicles for O'Day, a singer capable of both bemused irony and emotional directness, with the diction for Broadway lyrics and a facility for inventive scat singing. "Boogie Blues" updates an early O'Day hit with Gene Krupa's band, while Al Cohn's "Night Bird" and Horace Silver's "Senor Blues" are unusual in being big-band vocal treatments of bop tunes. The band is terrific, and altoist Phil Woods and guitarist Barry Galbraith make particularly good solo contributions. O'Day's vocals were overdubbed at separate sessions. It may add to the vocal presence, and given her scat exchange with Willie Dennis's trombone on "Up State," it seems to take nothing away from her involvement in the band. ---Stuart Broomer

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Recorded in New York, New York on October 16, 1961 and at Sunset Recorders, Los Angeles, California from November to December 1961. Originally issued on Verve (8442). Includes liner notes by Dom Cerulli. Digitally remastered using 22-bit technology by Kevin Reeves (Polygram Studios).

One of the greatest of jazz singers, Anita O'Day can also be one of the most erratic. When she's on, O'Day is a brilliant improviser, endlessly creative yet shrewdly paring away any extra-musical excess that might obscure her interpretations. On the occasional off day, O'Day's famous vibrato-less instrument would fail her pitchwise. Ever the unromantic "hip chick," her unconvincing ballads can then be mired in low-energy bathos.

Happily, ALL THE SAD YOUNG MEN is crisply arranged by the equally creative Gary McFarland. O'Day convivially meets him halfway in a well-chosen set of mostly lesser known bluesy numbers, three of which were written by McFarland expressly for this session. Speaking of the blues, the album opens and closes with breezy trademark O'Day performances of two jazz originals, Gene Krupa's "Boogie Blues," which Anita used to scat in her celebrated Krupa-Eldridge days, and Horace Silver's "Senor Blues." But the highlight here has to be O'Day's knowing take on the title tune, Fran Landesman & Tommy Wolf's well-sketched portrait of '50s bohemia, a likely subject for bathos, sure, but the singer's cool rendition turns all skepticism inside out. Creed Taylor's well-recorded 1961 production has been superbly remastered in another choice addition to Verve's By Request series. –cduniverse.com

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