

Bobbi Humphrey - Flute In (1971)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Ain't No Sunshine* 2:30 02. *It's Too Late* 3:05 03. *Sidewinder* 6:13 04. *Sad Bag* 5:05
05. *Spanish Harlem* 3:45 06. *Don't Knock My Funk* 4:36 07. *Set Us Free* 5:45 Bobbi
Humphrey - flute Lee Morgan - trumpet (tracks 3 & 5-8) Billy Harper - tenor saxophone (tracks
3 & 5-8) George Devens - vibes, marimba, percussion Hank Jones (tracks 1, 4, 7 & 8), Frank
Owens (tracks 2, 3, 5 & 6) - piano, electric piano Gene Bertoncini - guitar George Duvivier -
bass (tracks 1, 4, 7 & 8) Gordon Edwards - electric bass (tracks 2, 3, 5 & 6) Jimmy Johnson
(tracks 2, 3, 5 & 6), Idris Muhammad (tracks 1, 4, 7 & 8) - drums Ray Armando - conga Wade
Marcus – arranger

Last time out we looked at two particularly neglected Blue Note gems from keyboard man Ronnie Foster which actually got me to thinking about the present state of that iconic jazz catalog. While the Connoisseur and RVG series have brought to light many of the best items from the vaults, the fact remains that there are still a small number of releases that have yet to make it to CD and deserve to be heard once again. So for the next few months, our efforts will be spent on uncovering those few remaining Blue Note titles that have somehow managed to remain just under the radar of current reissue projects.

While she spent a brief stay at Epic Records in the late '70s and recorded a few recent sides that find her still in peak form, the cornerstone of flutist Bobbi Humphrey's career is squarely built upon the half dozen albums she cut for Blue Note beginning in 1971. A native of Texas, Humphrey impressed such jazz luminaries as Dizzy Gillespie and Duke Ellington while she was still in her teens. Although not generally lauded by critics, Humphrey garnered a good deal of popular appeal with a style that mixed elements of funk and jazz and which yielded maximum crossover appeal.

Only two of Humphrey's six Blue Note sides are presently available and the transcendent

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Blacks and Blues is fortunately easy enough to find these days. This 1973 classic is really the best place to start for the uninitiated, deftly mixing all the best elements of Humphrey's style and possessing a strong program of original material. Still, as debut sets go, Bobbi's Flute-In is hard to beat and its current scarcity is really unfortunate. For starters, it says something about the youngster's talents that she holds her own in the heavy company of Lee Morgan and Billy Harper. Secondly, the smart program arranged by Wade Marcus mixes pop hits and original material in a manner that should appeal to both diehards and those with more commercial tastes.

As for the pop ditties, "Ain't No Sunshine, "It's Too Late, and "Spanish Harlem each get peppy arrangements that put Bobbi up front for some fine soloing. In a smart new makeover, Morgan's "The Sidewinder sounds totally fresh and Humphrey makes the most of its boogaloo beat. They often say that a ballad is the truest measure of a jazz musician's substance and if that's so, Humphrey proves her worth with "Sad Bag, a particularly engaging performance that is worth the price of admission alone. Another highlight is the expansive "Journey to Morocco, which contains an extended solo spot from Bobbi. It's here that you can really appreciate her superb tone, sense of storytelling, and ability to pace herself.

At a time when Blue Note's fortunes were definitely on the decline, Bobbi Humphrey's Flute-In reminds us that there were valuable trinkets to be found here and there among the label's lesser efforts. You just have to look harder to find them. ---C. Andrew Hovan, allaboutjazz.com

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