

Cannonball Adderley & Milt Jackson - Things Are Getting Better (1958)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Blues Oriental* 2. *Things Are Getting Better* 3. *Serves Me Right* 4. *Serves Me Right* 5. *Groovin' High* 6. *The Sidewalks Of New York* 7. *The Sidewalks Of New York* 8. *Sounds For Sid* 9. *Just One Of Those Things* Artists: Cannonball Adderley (alto saxophone); Milt Jackson (vibraphone); Wynton Kelly (piano); Percy Heath (acoustic bass); Art Blakey (drums).

This title provides ample evidence why Cannonball Adderley (alto sax) is considered one of the masters of his craft. Here he joins forces with Modern Jazz Quartet co-founder Milt Jackson (vibes) to create a variety of sonic atmospheres. They are backed by the all-star ensemble of Wynton Kelly (piano), Percy Heath (bass), and the one and only Art Blakey (drums). The moody "Blues Oriental" opens the set with Jackson immediately diving in with his trademark fluid runs and shimmering intonation. Adderley counters with a light and lively line that weaves between the rhythm section. The optimistic "Things Are Getting Better" is a good-natured romp as the co-leads trade and cajole each other into some downright rollicking exchanges. This directly contrasts with the sultry "Serves Me Right," which allows the combo members to demonstrate their collective musical malleability. The interaction between Adderley and Jackson sparkles as they entwine their respective playing with an uncanny singularity of spirit. The cover of Dizzy Gillespie's "Groovin' High" contains another spirited performance with some thoroughly engaging improvisation, especially during Adderley's voracious solos. "Sidewalks of New York" bops freely as Jackson unleashes some sublime licks against a hearty and equally boisterous sax. Adderley's "Sounds for Sid" demonstrates his uncanny ability to swing with a strong R&B vibe. With drop-dead timing and profound instrumental chops, this cut is undoubtedly one of the best from Adderley's earliest canon. The album concludes with a jumping reading of Cole Porter's "Just One of Those Things." While Wynton Kelly has been uniformly solid, his interjections stand out here as he bridges and undergirds the two as they banter with flair and aplomb. When *Things Are Getting Better* was issued on CD, two bonus tracks supplemented the original seven-song running order. These consist of alternate takes of "Serves Me Right" and "Sidewalks of New York." In the case of the former, it can be reasonably argued that this outtake might emotively best the version initially chosen as the master. This disc can be recommended without hesitation to all manner of jazz enthusiast, as it quite literally offers

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something for every taste. ---Lindsay Planer, Rovi

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