

Count Basie & Sarah Vaughan (1961)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Perdido*
2. *Lover Man*
3. *I Cried for You*
4. *Alone*
5. *There Are Such Things*
6. *Mean to Me*
7. *Gentleman Is a Dope, The*
8. *You Go to My Head*
9. *Until I Met You*
10. *You Turned the Tables on Me*
11. *Little Man (You've Had a Busy Day)*
12. *Teach Me Tonight - (bonus track)*
13. *If I Were a Bell - (bonus track)*
14. *Until I Met You - (alternate version)*

Personnel:

Sarah Vaughan, Joe Williams (vocals); Frank Foster (arranger, tenor saxophone); Thad Jones (arranger, trumpet); Ernie Wilkins (arranger); Frank Wess (alto & tenor saxophones, flute); Marshall Royal (alto saxophone, clarinet); Billy Mitchell (tenor saxophone); Charlie Fowlkes (baritone saxophone, flute); Sonny Cohn, Joe Newman, Snooky Young (trumpet); Henry Coker, Al Grey, Benny Powell (trombone); Kirk Stuart (piano); Freddie Green (guitar); Eddie Jones (bass); Sonny Payne (drums).

Recorded at Capitol Studios, New York in July 1960 and January 1961

While this album is misleadingly titled (Count Basie doesn't appear on the record at all - the piano is actually played by Kirk Stuart), it's a brilliant teaming of the Count Basie Orchestra and

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the legendary Sarah Vaughan. Basie's legacy was largely due to his band leading skills, and he rarely featured himself on record or in concert; to hear the sound and approach that Basie's sidemen use is to hear the musical conception and style of Basie himself.

"Perdido" and "Alone" showcase Sarah Vaughan's incredible range and perfectly controlled vibrato, and "Teach Me Tonight" and "If I Were a Bell" feature Vaughan with Joe Williams, the latter featuring the two singing icons trading lyrics back and forth. Marked by wonderful Thad Jones arrangements, COUNT BASIE AND SARAH VAUGHAN swings hard, and melts the heart.

The thing that always seems to get overlooked in any discussion of Basie's music is his extraordinary taste as an accompanist. What we all recognize as the classic, minimalist "Count Basie style" of piano playing actually evolved from his role as a supporting commentator to his soloists. In "Basie II," where the whole band became an extension of the leader's style, it comes as no surprise that the Basie Band became the premiere big band for accompanying singers. EVERYBODY, from B. B. King to Frank Sinatra, wanted to record with the Basie Band. So, putting Sarah Vaughan out front of the orchestra proves to be a particular stroke of genius.

Sarah was, as everybody knows by now, an "unlimited" vocalist, with complete control over her incredible 3 1/2 octave range. She came up in the same Earl Hines Band that was "the incubator of bebop," producing such talents as Lucky Thompson, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie and Art Blakey, to name just a few. Dizzy's famous "A Night In Tunisia" was originally written as a vocal feature for Sarah Vaughan. Her chops on all of these songs combine with a rare gift for getting to the emotional and musical core of things that is simply astounding. Even superficial show-tunes, like "The Gentleman Is a Dope," emerge as major revelations the way she sings them. Meanwhile, the Basie Band supports her with just the right mix of drama and tone color throughout. Basie insists on honest JAZZ performance on every number, so that even the more sentimental numbers emerge as standout vocal stylings. There is none of the pop schmaltz which too often invades Sarah's recordings with others. So, what we get here is perhaps the most unlimited jazz singer ever, doing what only she can do, while the Basie Bands supports her with powerful, punchy, TASTY charts, executed with the usual phenomenal precision. Give one listen to "You Turned the Tables on Me" and you'll know why this CD belongs in your collection. --- D. J. Zabriskie, Rovi

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