

Harry James □ – Verve Jazz Masters 55 (1996)

Written by bluesever

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1 *I Surrender Dear* 3:02 2 *Walkin'* 4:19 3 *Eyes* 4:10 4 *Lover Man (Oh, Where Can You Be?)* 3:20 5 *The Truth* 3:04 6 *End Of Town Blues* 3:00 7 *Hommage À Swee Pea* 5:13 8 *Cornet Chop Suey* 2:41 9 *If I Could Be With You* 2:36 10 *Frenesi* 2:03 11 *Blues Like* 4:15 12 *The Jazz Connoisseur* 3:32 13 *Sophisticated Lady* 2:25 14 *A Swinging Serenade* 3:22 15 *Rosebud* 3:48 16 *Mister Johnson* 2:53

John Audino Trumpet Bud Billings Trumpet Modesto Briseno Sax (Tenor) Nick Buono Trumpet Joe Cadena Trombone Dick Cathcart Trumpet Joe Comfort Bass Corky Corcoran Sax (Tenor) Jay Corre Sax (Tenor) Vince Diaz Trombone Bob Edmondson Trombone Sam Firmature Sax (Tenor) Jake Hanna Drums Dick Hyde Trombone Harry James Trumpet Red Kelly Bass Fred Koyen Trumpet Dick Leith Trombone Herb Lorden Sax (Alto) Dave Madden Sax (Tenor) Matty Matlock Clarinet Larry McGuire Trumpet Dick McQuardy Trombone Eddie Miller Sax (Tenor) Jack Mills Drums Ollie Mitchell Trumpet Jack Perciful Piano Charlie Persip Drums Russ Phillips Bass Bob Poland Sax (Tenor) Buddy Rich Drums Joe Riggs Sax (Alto) Bob Rolfe Trumpet Ray Sims Trombone Ernie Small Sax (Baritone) Ernie Tack Trombone Rob Turk Trumpet Dempsey Wright Guitar

Although he has surprisingly few CDs currently available, Harry James remains one of the world's most famous trumpeters, more than a decade after his death. This Verve CD is a sampler of his MGM recordings of 1959-64 and, although the claim in the liner notes that this was James' most creative period is nonsense, he does sound versatile and in consistently fine form on the wide-ranging set. Whether it be swing standards, challenging charts by Ernie Wilkins and Ralph Burns (including two that were previously unissued) or a tribute to Louis Armstrong on "Cornet Chop Suey," James is in fine form. ---Scott Yanow, AllMusic Review

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Shortly after his release from his Capital contract, James recorded numerous LPs for MGM, the masters of which are now controlled by Verve/Polygram. Until those original recordings are re-released in their entirety, we'll have to make do with these selected tracks, all of which are wonderful. Spanning a period of time in the early 60's, the original albums featured great arrangements, wonderful musicianship, and quite good recording quality. My favorite track (and there are really no bad tracks on this date - I just wish there were more!) is a cover of the old Bing Crosby tune I Surrender, Dear, taken from a small group date with Buddy Rich on drums. Harry plays some of the best improvisational jazz trumpet I've ever heard on this tune, and it's breathtaking to listen to. The Jazz Connoisseur, title track from the album of the same name, demonstrates James' approach to more modern jazz arrangements, and the band cooks. Lover Man highlights James' ability to take a back seat to no soloist on his instrument. Walkin', an Ernie Wilkins arrangement of the (then new) jazz evergreen, is the best big band version I've encountered. Overall, until (I pray) the original recordings are re-released in their entirety, this release will do nicely. Thank you, Verve! ---R. Viehdorfer, amazon.com

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