

Louis Armstrong & Oscar Peterson - Louis Armstrong meets Oscar Peterson (1957/1998)

Written by bluesever

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1 *That Old Feeling* 2 *Let's Fall In Love* 3 *I'll Never Be The Same* 4 *Blues In The Night (My Mama Done Tol' Me)* 5 *How Long Has This Been Going On?* 6 *I Was Doing All Right* 7 *What's New?* 8 *Moon Song* 9 *Just One Of Those Things* 10 *There's No You* 11 *You Go To My Head* 12 *Sweet Lorraine* 13 *I Get A Kick Out Of You* 14 *Makin' Whoopee* 15 *Willow Weep For Me* 16 *Let's Do It* Louis Armstrong - Vocals, Trumpet
Oscar Peterson - Piano Herb Ellis - Guitar Ray Brown - Bass Louis Bellson – Drums

By 1957, hard bop was firmly established as the "jazz of now," while pianist Oscar Peterson and his ensemble with bassist Ray Brown and guitarist Herb Ellis were making their own distinctive presence felt as a true working band playing standards in the swing tradition. Louis Armstrong was more recognizable to the general public as a singer instead of the pioneering trumpet player he was. But popularity contests being the trend, Armstrong's newer fans wanted to hear him entertain them, so in retrospect it was probably a good move to feature his vocalizing on these tracks with Peterson's band and guest drummer Louie Bellson sitting in. The standard form of Armstrong singing the lead lines, followed by playing his pithy and witty horn solos based on the secondary melody, provides the basis for the format on this charming but predictable recording. What happens frequently is that Armstrong and Peterson play lovely ad lib vocal/piano duets at the outset of many tunes. They are all songs you likely know, with few upbeat numbers or obscure choices. It is, however, the familiarity of songs like the midtempo "Let's Fall in Love," with Armstrong's gravelly scat singing, and his marvelous ability to riff off of the basic songs, that make these offerings endearing. A classic take of "Blues in the Night" is the showstopper, while choosing "Moon Song" is a good, off-the-beaten-path pick as the trumpeter plays two solo choruses, and he leads out on his horn for once during the slightly bouncy, basic blues "I Was Doing All Right." Some extremely slow tunes crop up on occasion, like "How Long Has This Been Going On?," an atypically downtempo take of "Let's Do It," and "You Go to My Head," featuring Peterson's crystalline piano. There are the dependable swingers "Just One of Those Things," "I Get a Kick Out of You," and "Sweet Lorraine," with Peterson at his accompanying best. There's a ramped-up version of the usually downtrodden "Willow Weep for Me" and a duet between Armstrong and Ellis on the sad two-minute ditty "There's No You." All in all, it's difficult to critique or find any real fault with these sessions,

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though Peterson is subsumed by the presence of Armstrong, who, as Leonard Feather notes, really needs nobody's help. That this was their only collaboration speaks volumes to how interactive and communal the session really was, aside from the fairly precious music.

---Michael G. Nastos, AllMusic Review

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