

Ron Carter - Uptown Conversation (1971)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Uptown Conversation* 2. *Ten Strings* 3. *Half A Row* 4. *R.J.* 5. *Little Waltz* 6. *Einbahnstrasse* 7. *Doom* 8. *Einbahnstrasse (bonus)* 9. *Doom (bonus)* Ron Carter - Bass, Bass (Electric), Composer, Guitar, Guitar (Bass) Sam T. Brown - Guitar Billy Cobham - Drums Herbie Hancock - Piano, Piano (Electric) Hubert Laws - Flut Grady Tate - Drums

Ron Carter's *Uptown Conversation* may very well be the most intriguing, challenging, and resonant statement of many he has made over the years as a leader. Originally on the Embryo imprint of Atlantic Records, *Wounded Bird* now reissues it with two alternate takes. As a prelude to his funkier electric efforts for CTI and the wonderful dates for Milestone Records where he emphasized the piccolo bass, these selections showcase Carter with unlikely partners in early creative improvised settings, a hint of R&B, and some of the hard-charging straight-ahead music that he is most well known for. Flute master Hubert Laws takes a prominent role on several tracks, including the title cut with its funky but not outdated style, where he works in tandem with Carter's basslines. On "R.J.," the short hard bop phrasings of Laws and Carter are peppy and brisk, but not clipped. The first rendering of "Little Waltz" apart from the Miles Davis repertoire to which Carter contributed is more pensive and delicate, with Laws at the helm rather than Davis' trumpet. Carter's trio recordings with pianist Herbie Hancock and drummer Billy Cobham are cast in a different light, as the lengthy "Half a Row" (referring to six of a twelve-tone row) is at once free, spacy, loose, and very atypical for these soon-to-be fusion pioneers. The three stay in a similar dynamic range during "Einbahnstrasse," but move to some hard bop changes informed by the brilliant chordal vamping and extrapolating of Hancock, while "Doom" is another 3/4 waltz with chiming piano offsetting Carter's skittering bass. There's also a free-and-easy duet with guitarist Sam Brown, and this reissued CD also includes alternate takes of both "Doom" and "Einbahnstrasse" as bonus tracks, the latter piece omitting the dark foreboding intro. Considering the music Ron Carter played preceding and following this effort, you'd be hard-pressed to find a more diverse, intellectually stimulating, enlivened, and especially unrestricted musical statement in his long and enduring career. ---Michael G. Nastos, Rovi

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