

Sonny Stitt - Jazz Masters 89 (1996)

Written by bluesever

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1. In a sentimental mood 2. In a Mellow tone 3. Jeep's blues 4. The way you look tonight 5. Forecast 6. You don't know what love is / I'm getting sentimental over you 7. Lester leaps in 8. Just friends 9. All God's children got rhythm

Sonny Stitt was born in Boston but grew up in Saginaw, Michigan. He came from an extremely musical family — his father taught music at the college level, his brother was a concert pianist, and his sister was a singer — and his own training began on piano at age seven. Shortly thereafter he switched to clarinet. He left home for life on the road early, touring with Tiny Bradshaw before joining the legendary Billy Eckstine orchestra in 1945. A year later he was participating in some of the early, classic bebop recording sessions with Kenny Clarke, Dizzy Gillespie, Bud Powell, Fats Navarro, and other giants.

Stitt worked exclusively on the alto saxophone on these early recordings; yet there was more to Stitt than his command of one horn. He began performing on the tenor in 1949 (in an effort, according to some, to distance himself musically from Charlie Parker), and he immediately became a leading influence on the larger saxophone. Stitt brought the same effortless facility to bear on the tenor plus a more relaxed attack that suggested his affinity with Lester Young. Stitt was a complete saxophone virtuoso, who recorded several impressive solos on baritone in the Fifties.

Stitt often worked with pickup bands as he toured, continuing his odyssey until his death. In his final decades he introduced the electric Varitone saxophone, worked extensively in the funky organ-group setting, and participated in such further all-star gatherings as the Giants of Jazz, which included Art Blakey, Dizzy Gillespie, and Thelonious Monk. He was a true road warrior and blowing demon to the end, never failing to provide a lesson to any younger player who dared to test him on the bandstand. --- vervemusicgroup.com

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