



The Oscar Peterson Trio + The Singers Unlimited *In Tune*

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Masterful piano playing meets up with elaborate vocal harmony in this legendary MPS summit meeting from the label's early period. Oscar Peterson, MPS head Hans Georg Brunner-Schwer's long-time friend and collaborator, along with Peterson's colleagues, bassist George Mraz and drummer Louis Hayes, act as the counterweights to the vocal architects from Chicago. Peterson himself instigated the first contact between the Schwarzwald studio and The Singers Unlimited (TSU). That contact developed into a fruitful decade-long relationship; the Villingen studio's superb technology perfectly suited the sophisticated requirements of vocal artist and leader Gene Puerling. Recorded in 1971, "In Tune" was TSU's first album on MPS. It feeds off the languages of the two musical poles, whether it's in the swinging give and take of the opener, "Sesame Street", or in the switch from the reverential orchestrally-layered choir intro to Peterson's sparkling play on "It Never Entered My Mind". It's the same with the dreamy arrangement of "The Shadow of Your Smile"; in his role as delicate accompanist, Peterson narrows it down to the essentials. Peterson and TSU soprano Bonnie Herman take improvisatory strolls together in the nostalgic Michel Legrand ballad "Once Upon a Summertime". Two Brazilian excursions are highlighted: In Antônio Carlos Jobim's "Children's Game" TSU delivers polysyllabic ornamentation to Peterson's rollicking waltz whimsy; in Luis Bonfá's "The Gentle Rain", Peterson plays around with the amative choral harmonies.

MPS Releases Fall 2017

The MPS reissue series kicks off in the fall of 2017 with an attractive 'five-pack' of artists who have been central to this label; milestones, rediscoveries and new discoveries, as well as rare and much sought-after pieces are hidden within the recordings from the years 1967 through 1973, with the halcyon (golden) year 1971 smack dab in the middle. The music covers a wide range of styles and formats, ranging from piano masterpieces to vocal jazz on through to filigree guitar work.

On the album "In Tune", a cappella vocal jazz meets up with elaborate keyboard play, as Oscar Peterson joins forces with the vocal architects from Chicago, The Singers Unlimited. A refined dialogue between two musical poles unfolds in a panoply of swinging cooperation, nostalgic, dreamy moments and Brazilian excursions. This 1971 recording was The Singers Unlimited's first album for MPS, and the beginning of a fruitful partnership that had initially come about at the recommendation of Peterson himself.

The musical journey moves on from the Canadian piano giant to his Jamaican colleague, Monty Alexander, who made his MPS debut in the same year with "Here Comes The Sun". Monty steps up with his quartet (bassist Eugene Wright, percussionist Montego Joe, drummer Duff Jackson) and offers up a superb repertoire ranging from a Beatles classic to blues and Latin-hued compositions on through to bebop-flavored pieces and a rock-saturated version of Miles Davis' "So What".

Englishman John Taylor represents the third voice of piano-centered jazz. With this reissue of "Decipher", an album that has long been off the market is available once again. For years Taylor was featured as the house pianist at Ronnie Scott's, London's legendary Jazzclub. First released in 1973, the album also boasts bassist Chris Laurence and drummer Tony Levin. "Decipher" offers a deep insight into Taylor's compositional abilities; virtuoso runs, abstract tonalities with pointillist strokes, an emotive jazz waltz and a soft-spoken ballad mark the trio's diversity and Taylor's emotive world.

Likewise, fans have longed for the re-release of Volker Kriegel's "Spectrum". In a thrilling rollercoaster ride, Kriegel's second album under his own name portrays the diverse qualities of the guitarist who at that time was the enfant terrible of the German and European jazz scene. The album captures an unusually broad stylistic range, as sitar rock, folksy lyricism, and a rondo shot through with free jazz alternate, while silky-smooth guitar runs, grooving percussion, and fluorescent Electra piano lines color the nuanced sound of this 1971 album.

Vocalist Mark Murphy, who died in 2015, was voted Male Vocalist of the Year four times by Downbeat. Early on in his eventful career, he created a musical bridge between America and the Old World that he later renewed by recordings with the likes of German trumpet phenom Till Brönner. Recorded in 1967, "Midnight Mood" stood in the middle of his European decade, a brilliant moment in his long musical journey. Surrounded by eight musicians from the famed Kenny Clarke/Francy Boland Big Band, Murphy performs persuasive adaptations of Ellington, luxuriates in the grandeur of Sinatra, steps in with a nonchalant Hispanic flair, and sounds the depths of dark sensuality and romantic ardor.

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