Hank Mobley – Newark 1953 (2012)

CD1: *01 – Ow 02 – There's A Small Hotel 03 – Ballad Medley – Darn That Dream ~ Where Or When ~ In Love In Vain ~ Stardust 04 – All That Things You Are 05 – Jumpin' With Symphony Sid* CD2: *01 – Announcement 02 – Lullaby Of BirdLand 03 – Embraceable You 04 – Keen And Peachy 05 – Pennies From Heaven 06 – Blues Is Green 07 – 's Wonderful* Personnel: Hank Mobley (tenor saxophone); Bennie Green (trombone); Walter Davis, Jr. (piano); Charlie Persip (drums).

While major jazz record labels chase the latest crossover fad with borderline jazz content and ignore historical, significant, unissued jazz performances in their vaults, smaller labels like Uptown regularly surprise jazz fans with live recordings that few knew existed at all, such as this evening taped by jazz industry veteran Ozzie Cadena. Hank Mobley is heard leading a house band with pianist Walter Davis, Jr., drummer Charlie Persip, and the obscure bassist Jimmy Schenck, with trombonist Bennie Green as the guest for the week. These two sets recorded at The Piccadilly in Newark come from a single night in 1953, making them among Mobley's earliest known recordings. Green was the senior man on the date and likely the one calling the tunes, though the house band matches him throughout the evening with their potent solos and strong rhythm. The extended workout of "Ow" is marked by a number of humorous quotes in the solos of Green and Davis, while the ballad medley (a regular feature in Jazz at the Philharmonic concerts and numerous club dates) showcases each man in turn save Persip. The extended rendition of "All the Things You Are" incorporates Dizzy Gillespie's famous B-flat introductory vamp, with Green's languid playing swinging, in addition to Mobley's mellow choruses and fine work by Davis as well. Green is showcased in a rhapsodic setting of "Embraceable You" and his own uptempo "Blues Is Green," with the band providing plenty of fire on the latter song. Though Mobley was only 23 at the time of these performances, he is already showing plenty of confidence on the bandstand and is hardly overshadowed by the more widely known Green. The fidelity is typical for night club recordings, giving the listener the feeling of being near the stage, though without excessive crowd noise. Like earlier historical recordings on the label, this two-CD set has detailed liner notes (by Bob Blumenthal) and lots of period photographs. These recordings are the first of several made at The Piccadilly by Cadena to be issued commercially, so hopefully more will follow this valuable release on Uptown. ---Ken Dryden, Rovi

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