Henry Jerome - Presents American Gold (1970)

1.Uptight 2.You've Made Me So Very Happy 3.Goin' Out Of My Head 4.Respect 5.Monday, Monday 6.Aquarius / Let The Sunshine In 7.The Shadow of Your Smile 8.Son Of A Preacher Man 9.Mrs. Robinson 10.Little Green Apples 11.Reach Out I'll Be There 12.What The World Needs Now Is Love 13.Oh Pretty Woman 14.Spinning Wheel 15.For Once In My Life 16.Scarborough Fair 17.Moon River 18.Sunny 19.Baby Love 20.By The Time I Get To Phoenix 21.Light My Fire 22.Spanish Harlem 23.Fly Me To The Moon 24.The Dock of the Bay

Like it or not, Henry Jerome manifests an impenetrable link between rockabilly, easy listening, the kitschy poetry of Rod McKuen, the economic policies of the 20th century, and perhaps even the Watergate break-in. Listeners who find easy listening to be anything but that and are dismissive of the notion that practicioners of this genre might possess any versatility whatsoever would do well to study the biography of this artist, generous chunks of which must be recounted if only to back up the bold claims made in the first sentence.

One immediate question concerning the man's not-so-uncommon name would be whether it is the same Henry Jerome who produced both the classic debut recordings of Johnny Burnette's trio as well as a stack of easy listening sides including the chart-scaling Brazen Brass of 1961. The answer is yes, Jerome revealing a surprising range of musical interests upon assuming an A&R position with the Coral label. This move came some three decades after Jerome, originally a trumpeter, started his initial series of orchestral groups.

In the mid-'30s the bandleader fronted Henry Jerome & His Stepping Tones, a ten-piece ensemble that featured vocalists such as David Allen, Frank Warren, and Kay Carlton. This group broadcast on the ABC network from an Edison Hotel venue known as the Green Room, exposure that led to fairly regular engagements despite prevailing critical opinion that this group

was "barely adequate musically." Jerome's best-known vocalist came along in 1944: Johnny Mandel would also find great fame as a songwriter but at this point was dealing with Jerome's notion of a modernized sound influenced by bebop.

Two of the gentlemen in the group also grappling with these arrangements were none other than Alan Greenspan -- future Chairman of the Federal Reserve -- on bass clarinet and saxophonist Leonard Garment, eventually to become an unfortunately overly busy counsel during the administration of Richard Nixon. Garment and Greenspan became great friends on the bandstand and it was this bond that led the former to put up the latter for the job of Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, Nixon later naming Greenspan to his nearly infinite Federal Reserve stewardship.

Despite the seemingly winning combination of modern sounds and budding political bigwigs, the '40s Jerome band lacked the commercial potential to survive past the end of the decade. He became a musical director at Decca, concentrating on large band recording rather than touring projects in the Brazen Brass mode as well as the popular discography of McKuen. He moved over to Coral in 1959, where his clients included Burnette and Lenny Dell & the Dimensions. The Burnette sides, including hits such as "Train Kept a Rollin'," remain among the undisputed masterpieces of the rockabilly sound. Jerome continued working during the '60s, putting out an album of his own on the United Artists label and writing the theme songs for a pair of silly television shows, The Soupy Sales Show and Winky-Dink and You. Jerome used the pseudonym of Al Mortimer for many of these published works. ---Eugene Chadbourne, Rovi

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