

Red Mitchell, Bob Brookmeyer, Zoot Sims - Happy Minors (1955)

Wpisany przez bluesever

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*A1 Happy Minor A2 Bluesology A3 Once In A While A4 Long Ago And Far Away
B1 Gone With The Wind B2 Kelly Green B3 Scrapple From The Apple* Bass – Red Mitchell Drums – Stan Levey Piano – Claude Williamson Tenor Saxophone – Zoot Sims
Trumpet – Conte Candoli Valve Trombone – Bob Brookmeyer

Bethlehem Records was founded in 1953 by Gus Wildi who initially employed the talents of vibraphonist Teddy Charles (West Coast) and, the visionary producer Creed Taylor (East Coast) as A & R men. This gem of a sextet fronted by bassist Red Mitchell was recorded on 02/01/1955 (BCP-1033- 10" Lp highly prized today by collectors) consisting of Bob Brookmeyer (trb), John Haley "Zoot" Sims (ts) (misspelled "Simms" on puckyish cover by Burt Goldblatt), Conte Candoli (tpt), Claude Williamson (p) and, Stan Levey (drm). Long unavailable on CD, this Japanese import appeared unexpectedly on the web without fanfare in 2013. The Bethlehem catalog has moved between nine owners since its sale to King Records in the early 1960's. Previous Bethlehem titles were re-issued seemingly at random under several different labels both domestic and foreign. The Bethlehem catalog is now owned and licensed by VMG-Salsoul, Division of Verse Music Group. Bethlehem Records official website conveniently provides a monthly schedule of prior and future releases via i-tunes for downloading individual songs or, entire albums with original artwork.

The average age of the participants recording this music was twenty eight, all were experienced veterans of the big bands then based in L.A. The West Coast scene in the early 1950's was flush with talented soloists and arrangers whom Bethlehem was anxious to record. The music heard here is tightly voiced in the ensembles (no arranging credits but, I suspect Brookmeyer was involved) and the solos are crisp, confident and, charged with vitality particularly, in the horns of Candoli and Sims. Each artist gets a chance to stretch out supported by the superb rhythm section throughout. Williamson shows his preference for Bud Powell while strongly introducing the stylings of Hampton Hawes and Horace Silver in his funky approach to comping behind Mitchell's solo on the trio feature entitled; "Bluesology". Mitchell solos with grace on a

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pensive version of the ballad, "Once in a While" displaying not only his jazz chops but, technical virtuosity. Williamson then adds his own Be-bop inspired commentary to complete the piece. The full sextet performs on the title tune "Happy Minor" (Zoot jumps out of the starting gate like a thoroughbred), "Long Ago and Far Away" and, "Gone with the Wind". Brookmeyer constructs a solo statement on "Gone with The Wind" that perfectly displays his unique flair for both melodic improvisation and structure which would eventually evolve into a career as a highly respected composer/arranger. "Kelly Green" again features the trio with the spotlight focusing on Mitchell whose virtuosity is reminiscent of Ellington's "Jack the Bear" with the legendary bassist, Jimmy Blanton. The date ends on Charlie Parker's "Scrapple from the Apple" with Sims out first (always swinging...) followed by Brookmeyer blending his 4/4 Kansas City roots with modernism and, unique valve trombone timbre. Candoli offers yet again another peppery solo driven forward by Mitchell, Williamson and, Levey providing the heat.

If you are interested in obtaining this CD this Japanese import would be your opportunity although perhaps difficult to locate. "Happy Minors" is deservedly a highly prized release for a very simple reason, the music is outstanding, often exceptional and, always inspired. Today, unfortunately only Claude Williamson remains however, this sextet in 1953 created some of the best jazz recorded on either coast at that time in my humble opinion. It still sounds great today. ---amazon.com

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