



Pure Pleasure CJS 9764

Stacey Kent: Let Yourself Go

Format: 2LPs 33rpm / gatefold sleeve

Manufacturer: Pure

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"Let Yourself Go" is an exceptional collection of 13 tunes written by the cream of popular song writers -- Berlin, Gershwin Brothers, and others -- honoring Fred Astaire's contributions to the vocal art. With his low key, narrow ranged voice, Astaire probably introduced and/or made popular more songs that were destined to become standard entries in the Great American Songbook than any other artist. Kent delivers this selective play list with one of three musical combinations, just piano, with piano plus rhythm, and with a larger aggregation which includes sax and guitar. Irrespective of the instrumental context, all of the tunes are delivered with Stacey's pleasant nasal twang to help her create the impression that the lyrics she's singing are part of an intimate one on one conversation with each listener. There's nothing over dramatic on this album. No gimmicks, just a voice as engaging as any on the scene conveying the meaning of a melody in the tradition of the person she is honoring, the inestimable Astaire.

Kent's pianist, David Newton, is one of the premiere accompanists in the U.K., having worked with such top flight singers as Tina May. He and Kent display their musical attraction to each other on a relaxed, suave rendition of "Isn't This a Lovely Day" and "They Can't Take That Away From Me", where Kent and Newton gently joust as they deliver an elegant rendition of this tune. 'Relaxed' is as good a word as any to describe the atmosphere for this session. There's nothing frenetic here. "S'Wonderful", usually performed at a fast pace, gets a languid, medium tempo treatment with Newton's piano, an effortlessly lilting Colin Oxley guitar and Jim Tomlinson's tenor sharing the mike with Kent. "A Fine Romance" is about as upbeat as it gets, with Oxley's cleaned line guitar setting the pace. Newton engages in a bit of Erroll Garner-like humming during his solo on this tune. Tomlinson's romantic tenor is featured on "Let Yourself Go" and "They All Laughed". On "One for My Baby", he brings out his clarinet, using the middle register to help create the proper melancholy mood for this definitive 'drowning my sorrows in booze' tune.

This is another excellent album by American born, U.K.-based singer Stacey Kent, and is happily recommended.

"Let Yourself Go" - Stacey Kent (voc); Jim Tomlinson (ts, as, cl); Colin Oxley (g); David Newton (p, keyb); Simon Thorpe (b); Steve Brown (dr)