



Pure Pleasure CTI 6024
Milt Jackson: Sunflower
Format: 1LP 33rpm / gatefold sleeve

Manufacturer: Pure Pleasure
Original label: CTI
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Recorded over two days in December of 1972 at Rudy Van Gelder's Englewood, New Jersey home studio, vibraphonist Milt Jackson's "Sunflower" is the first -- and best -- of his three albums for Creed Taylor's CTI imprint. (And one of the finest offerings on the label.) With a core band consisting of Herbie Hancock (playing electric and acoustic piano), bassist Ron Carter, drummer Billy Cobham, trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, drummer/percussionist Ralph McDonald, and guitarist Jay Berliner. A chamber orchestra exquisitely arranged and conducted by Don Sebesky adorns the session as well. Jackson's "For Someone I Love", opens the five-tune set, with Berliner playing solo flamenco guitar before the vibes, trumpet, and elements from the chamber orchestra delicately, impressionistically color the background. It gradually moves into a languid, bluesy ballad that slowly gains in both texture and dynamic until the strings trill tensely. Hubbard and Hancock engage them in solos that gently swing out the tune. The reading of Michel Legrand's "What Are You Doing for the Rest of Your Life" is a gorgeous showcase for Jackson; his solo dominates the arrangement. Carter gets downright funky on his upright to introduce Thom Bell's "People Make The World Go Round," and Hancock follows him on Rhodes. Jackson takes the melody, striking a layered contrast as Hubbard slips around all three playing an extension of the melody with requisite taste, fluidity, and taut phrasing. Hancock gets funky to the bone in his brief solo, as the vibes soar around and through his phrases. The title track is a Hubbard composition that floats and hovers with a Latin backbeat before shifting tempos as the solos begin. The expanded harmonic palette of trumpet with the reeds, woodwinds, and strings on the melody add an exotic textural palette for his solo. Jackson's "SKJ" closes the set with an old-school, swinging hard bop blues with barely detectable embellishments by Sebesky. While "Sunflower" sometimes feels more like a group session rather than a Jackson-led one, that's part of its exquisite beauty.

Recording: December 1972 at Van Gelder Studios by Rudy Van Gelder
Production: Creed Taylor "Sunflower" - Milt Jackson (vib); Freddie Hubbard (tp, flh); Herbie Hancock (p); Jay Berliner (g); Ron Carter (b); Billy Cobham (dr); Ralph MacDonald (perc) & strings

