

sual jazz listener, but for the vintage purist. --- *Perry Huntoon*

**STRIDE AND TRUE  
GRANT SIMPSON  
GSM001**

Grant Simpson (p). Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada. No date provided.

If I Could Be With You One Hour Tonight/ Dollar Dance/ Load of "Cole"/ You Can't Lose A Broken Heart/ On The Street Where You Live/ So Beautiful Like You/ Stridin' For HJ/ The Pearls/ Just As Though You Were Here/ How Can You Face Me/ Viper's Drag/ Love Of My Life/ Just Before Daybreak/ Echo Of Spring/ The Mule Walk/ Whitehorse Blues. TT 53:11.

Okay, so maybe Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada, is not the jazz capital of the world to most folks. But there is a pianist who lives there who couldn't care less about that. He is Grant Simpson, a most talented and capable piano player who is heard to good advantage on this CD. He has chosen his program wisely to display his wares, but the name of the game is *Stride*.

When speaking of favorites and influences, Grant cites James P. Johnson, Fats Waller, Ralph Sutton, Dick Wellstood, and Dave McKenna, among others. James P. was a particular favorite if only for his compositions, though not exclusively—JPJ could also play a little. There are four of Johnson's tunes here, a couple of Waller's, one each from Willie "The Lion" Smith, Jelly Roll Morton and Dick Wellstood and five that Grant wrote.

His salute to McKenna comes in the form of two standards, "On The Street Where You Live" and "Just As Though You Were Here." the latter of which he admits to lifting from Dave's Concord LP called *Left Handed Complement*. "On The Street..." is a compliment to McKenna's magnificent walking left hand and "Just As Though..." glorifies Dave's exquisite way with ballads.

Grant Simpson travels quite a bit and perhaps you have had the pleasure of hearing him. If he hasn't come your way yet, you should think about acquiring this CD. If your usual haunts don't stock it, you could get it from his Website: [www.grantsimpson.net](http://www.grantsimpson.net). In any event, you might pay a visit to the site. It is a nice one and you can sample portions of the CD while you are there. My thanks to Bill Gallagher for getting me on board. --- *Russ Chase*

**THE BEST OF THE CONCERT YEARS**

**ELLA FITZGERALD  
PABLO PACD-2405-441**

Ella Fitzgerald (vcl) with:

Tommy Flanagan (p) Keter Betts (b) Ed Thigpen (d). June 2, 1972: Night And Day/ Little White Lies/ Raymond Tunia (p) Herb Ellis (g) Ray Brown (b) J.C. Heard (d). November 18, 1953: Body And Soul/ Why Don't You Do Right?/ Oh, Lady, Be Good/ I Got It Bad And That Ain't Good/ How High The Moon/ My Funny Valentine/ Jimmy Jones (p) Bob Cranshaw (b) Sam Woodyard (d). March 26, 1967: It's Only A Paper Moon/ Day Dream/ If I Could Be With You/ Between The Devil And The Deep Blue Sea/ Paul Smith (p) Keter Betts (b) Bobby Durham (d). October 17, 1983: Willow Weep For Me/ All Of Me/ Blue Moon/ They Can't Take That Away From Me/ 'Round Midnight. TT 66:07.

The tunes on this compact disc have all been issued previously on Pablo. I do not think there is an alternate take here, so that those who have the tracks already will have nothing new to add to their collection.

These issues that state this is the *best* of this or that artist in a particular circumstance bother me no end. Most of the time, I find that my opinion and that of the compiler do not coincide. I do not profess to be a completist of Ella so cannot say if I would agree in this case or not. I do find the material to be quite satisfactory with only one reservation. The one criticism I have of Ms. Fitzgerald's work is that at times she seems to get carried away in her scat singing. One might describe it as "playing to the gallery." This does happen here on a couple of occasions. The work by the instrumentalists is fine throughout.

This CD can then be recommended with the two reservations: (1) all of the tunes have been issued before, and (2) a few lapses in her scat singing. --- *Herb Young*

**THE TWO OF US  
JOHNNY VARRO  
ARBORS ARCD 19292**

Johnny Varro (p). Bradenton, Florida, February 4-5, 2003.

If I Love Again/ Lullaby Of Birdland/ This Time The Dream's On Me/ I Could Write A Book/ Beatles Medley: Yesterday; Here, There And Everywhere/ Gone With The Wind/ The Two Of Us/ Lullaby Of The Leaves/ Michel Legrand Medley: Summer Me, Winter Me; Pieces Of Dreams/ The Pearls/ A Sleeping Bee/ Where Is Love?/ Valse/ Blame It On My Youth/ Green