

KEITH CHRISTIE QUARTET



Homage
to
the

DUKE



Esquire

20-047

MADE IN ENGLAND
20-047
(ELP 789)

Esquire

- 1, 2. Campbell Connelly & Co. Ltd.
- 3, 4. Francis Day & Hunter, Ltd.

KEITH CHRISTIE QUARTET
play Duke Ellington compositions

1. Drop me off in Harlem
2. Sultry Serenade
3. I got it bad and that ain't good
4. Main Stem

Keith Christie, trombone. Johnny Dee, alto sax.
Bill Sutcliffe, bass.
Allan Ganley, drums.
26 7.55.

LONG PLAYING

33 $\frac{1}{3}$
RPM

MICROGROOVE

UNAUTHORISED PUBLIC PERFORMANCE BROADCASTING AND COPYING OF THIS RECORD PROHIBITED

MADE IN ENGLAND
20-047
(ELP 796)

Esquire

- 1, 2. Francis Day & Hunter, Ltd.
3. Bradbury Wood Ltd.
4. Lawrence Wright Mus. Co. Ltd.

KEITH CHRISTIE QUARTET
play Duke Ellington compositions

1. Cotton tail
2. Never no lament
3. Baby, please stop and think about me
4. It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing

Keith Christie, trombone. Johnny Dee, alto sax.
piano (track 2). Bill Sutcliffe, bass.
Allan Ganley, drums.
26 7.55.

LONG PLAYING

33 $\frac{1}{3}$
RPM

MICROGROOVE

UNAUTHORISED PUBLIC PERFORMANCE BROADCASTING AND COPYING OF THIS RECORD PROHIBITED

ALL RIGHTS OF THE MANUFACTURER AND OF THE OWNER OF THE RECORDED WORK RESERVED

ALL RIGHTS OF THE MANUFACTURER AND OF THE OWNER OF THE RECORDED WORK RESERVED

KEITH CHRISTIE QUARTET

play the compositions of Duke Ellington

It caused quite a stir when Keith Christie disbanded the Christie Brothers' Swoopers (which he co-lead with clarinetist Ian Christie) to take his trombone into Johnny Dankworth's brass team.

This happened in October, 1955, when Johnny formed his first big band after capturing the combo field with his memorable Johnny Dankworth Seven. And why did Keith's appointment to one of the four trombone chairs surprise so many people? Because, until then, the misguided folk who like to divide jazz into wasteful compartments had categorised him as a confirmed traditionalist.

But the characters who had shaken their heads in amazement were soon nodding them in appreciation. Christie, without changing his feisty, but beautiful, good-humoured but certainly not unsuitable manner of playing to any marked degree, sounded as comfortably "at home" with Johnny as with the Swoopers, and, before that, with Humphrey Lyttelton.

This was one of Britain's most commanding jazz talents able, by his example, to broaden the outlooks of at least a few bigoted people. Thus, too, was a short sequence of events started which led to the making of our present LP.

Keith's initial solo assignments with the Dankworth band—a climactic blast or two during the course of a full-scale reorchestration—soon led to an arrangement whereby he was encouraged to lead an integral group of his own within the band . . . and the Keith Christie Quartet came to life.

The little unit accompanied Dankworth singer Cleo Laine in an *Esquire* album of British songs (15-007) and this instrumental set of Duke Ellington compositions features the same personnel (except that Bill Le Sage, added to the foursome on vibes and piano for Cleo's LP, is not present here).

With Keith himself on trombone, the line-up reads as follows: Johnny Dee (alto sax), Bill Sutcliffe (trumpet) and Allan Gasley (drums). Johnny also worked out the routines (they are really too informal to be called "arrangements") and played piano in the second chorus of *Never No Lament*.

A passing mention should, I suppose, be given to Gerry Mulligan, who inaugurated the idea of a piano-less quartet in the early '50s—and, of course, the Christie group virtually is a piano-less quartet that short sequence on one track notwithstanding. But Keith, Johnny, Bill and Allan handle the formula in such a light-heartedly individual way that comparisons with Gerry's records prove nothing at all.

Without any chordal instruments, and with only two horns, the bass takes on an especially important rôle in music like this. It can be used with the trombone and also in three-part harmony (the theme statement of *Drop Me Off at Harlem*) or as a means to provide a melodic counter-figure (*If Don't Mean a Thing*).

These are just two of the devices which keep



Picture by courtesy of MUSIC MIRROR

the sound patterns constantly varied, the rhythmic contours consistently inventive, however.

Trombone and alto lines interweave, one sometimes subsidiary to the other, the two often of equal significance in unison (the second chorus of *Main Menu*) or contrapuntal (the last eight bars of the theme statement of *Baby, Please Stop and Think About Me*, where Keith blows "Hayfoot, Strawfoot" against Johnny's statement of the basic theme) passages.

Impudent fun (Keith's quotational second chorus on *Saltury Serenade*), lyrical charm (Johnny's solo version of *I Got It Bad*) and plain, honest, free-flying jazz (*Cotton Tail*, for instance) all add to the variety of an ever-entertaining set. Duke's tunes should need no introduction to most listeners. At least those of them featured here rank among the best-loved "standards" in jazz—I *Get It Bad* (1941), *If Don't Mean a Thing* (1931) and *Never No Lament* (1940) which is perhaps better known nowadays in a lyrical version as "Don't Get Around Much Any More".

Drop Me Off at Harlem dates from 1932, when trombonist Lawrence Brown had just added his darkly exotic solo voice to the Ellington ensemble. *Saltury Serenade* (which, like *Never No Lament*, spotlights Keith on open, instead of muted, trom-

bone) was originally written for another Ducal trombonist, Tyree Glenn, in 1947.

Main Menu, a fast twelve-bar blues, bowed into the Ellington library in 1942, when for a while it was called "Altitude". *Cotton Tail* (1940) used to be renamed Ben Webster's inevitable solo opus with Duke.

Baby, Please Stop and Think About Me may, however, be unfamiliar to most Brits, as it was never recorded commercially by Ellington—or, so far as I can gather, by anyone else until now. I came across a piano copy of the song in a Canadian Air Force club during the war, eventually forgot about it, but suddenly thought of recommending it to Keith when the items for this LP were being selected . . . eleven years later!

Such a programme, interpreted by such an engaging group, would have been a welcome addition to the record lists at any time. But it now takes on an extra special significance. The original Keith Christie Quartet disbanded in September, 1955, when Keith left the Dankworth organisation to team up with tenorist Tommy Whittle.

Therefore, the Quartet will almost certainly not be heard again as constituted here. Our thanks are due to all concerned for providing us with such an apt souvenir of the sounds it made.

MIKE BUTCHER.