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PR 7211

WILLIS JACKSON / COOKIN' SHERRY

Grimes



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WILLIS JACKSON, tenor sax
 JACK McDUFF, organ
 BILL JENNINGS, guitar
 WENDELL MARSHALL, bass
 MILT HINTON, bass (A2, B2)
 BILL ELLIOT, drums (A1, B1, B3)
 AL JOHNSON, drums
 BUCK CLARK, conga drum (A2, B2)

A1. MELLOW BLUES
 2. SPORTIN'
 3. WHEN I FALL IN LOVE

B1. COOKIN' SHERRY
 2. WHERE ARE YOU
 3. CONTRASTS

At a time when jazz seems to be floundering and looking for new and dominant directions, and jazz musicians are experimenting with new modes of expression and technique, it is particularly pleasurable to listen to a group as down-to-earth as Willis Jackson's. The artists on "Cookin' Sherry" do not use toy or plastic instruments. They play the changes to the tunes in the same key, and they have no private, musical jokes. The quintet does not strive to create a new trend or prove a debatable point. The sole object of "Cookin' Sherry" is to entertain.

"Cookin' Sherry" presents Jackson and company at their best in a swingin' set that is sure to please their current fans and certain to attract new ones. For those who are more introspective and sedate in their appreciation of jazz, "Cookin' Sherry" will fill the bill. Drop the needle on any of the six tracks, sit back, and there you are in your favorite haunt with the Jackson combo on stage, playing just for you.

For dancers, the tempos and types are nicely varied. The tunes are done in a direct, listenable and imaginative manner that has wide appeal.

Despite the fact that all of the musicians, heard on "Cookin' Sherry," are not regular members of Jackson's group, they sound as though they have been playing together as a unit for a long time.

Bill Jennings, the guitarist for the quintet, is a regular. He has an interesting and unique style. Guitarists have a tough role among musicians. Often they are buried in the rhythm section. Few get the oppor-

tunity to do anything adventurous, unless they happen to front their group. Jennings overcomes this handicap. You are always conscious of his playing—when he is featured on a solo passage, or when he is filling in percussively behind Jackson or McDuff's solos. He has that ability to alter tone and expression so that nothing he does is lost. At times, when he plays unison with Jackson, it seems that there are two tenors in the group. This is especially so on "Where Are You?"

Jack McDuff's swingin' organ is the solidifying element in the group. What he does, to a great extent, controls the freedom of the other players. However, he never intrudes or hampers. In addition to allowing an harmonic base from which the others can spring, he must consistently contribute his own imaginative drive. Since "Cookin' Sherry" was waxed, McDuff has formed his own successful unit.

Al Johnson was a regular member of Jackson's group at the time of the sessions for "Cookin' Sherry." He is a versatile drummer who is able to alter his attack and patterns to suit the needs of the combo perfectly. He can be funky and bluesy—showing a heavier hand on the rhythm and up tunes and a lighter feeling on the ballad outings.

Jackson does not usually use a bass for club engagements. For recording purposes, however, he has expanded his group to include two of the top bass players in the business. Milt Hinton has a beautiful, big and full sound. To see him in action on the stand or in the studio is to witness a symphony of motion. He fully deserves his title of "Mr. Rhythm." It is easily understood why Jackson should want to use his talents for "Cookin' Sherry." Hinton is one of the most sought-after of musicians and has played with many groups.

Wendell Marshall also has a full understanding of the group effort. As with Milt Hinton, the bass in Marshall's hands becomes more than just a tool for providing a chord change base for the other musicians. He, too, is much in demand for jazz and pop recording sessions and has worked with several groups.

Jackson's group becomes a sextet on "Sportin'." Buck Clark, who has been heard on other LP's with Jackson, is featured on conga drum for this tune. The extra percussion on this piece offers even wider room for the other five men to improvise.

The dominant sound on "Cookin' Sherry" is Jackson's. It is doubtful that a better cross-section of the

moods of Willis Jackson has ever been shown before. In the six numbers on this release, Jackson shows warmth, tenderness, pensiveness and a musical sense of humor. He is definitely blowing his best.

The selection of tunes is an eternal challenge for the dedicated artist. This is surprisingly difficult, even though there is a vast store of popular, musical literature. Almost everyone's favorite tune has been recorded by an instrumentalist or vocalist, and often a tune that may seem just right to fit in with a group of others for a session has already been done by an artist in a previous album.

The problem of selection is only slightly lessened by altering tempos—applying a Latin beat to a ballad, doing a rhythm number slowly or any of the other rhythmic variations. For "Cookin' Sherry" Jackson has solved the problem handsomely. Included are three evergreens and three originals, and as stated before, Jackson reveals several frames of mind in presenting the six tunes.

His pensive frame of mind is beautifully displayed on "When I Fall in Love." Since this tune was introduced a few years back in the film, "One Minute to Zero," it has become a favorite with singers and instrumentalists—so much so that one might think that all that is to be musically said about the song may have been previously stated. However, Jackson explores new areas in his treatment of the tune, and he makes it sound as fresh as ever.

The humorous side of Willis Jackson is shown on "Sportin'." The song is light and breezy, and all of the musicians seem to have an easy and care-free attitude toward the tune.

"Contrasts" shows Jackson's warmth. The group has a big, lush sound here, and the number comes in for a pretty and sincere reading. "Where Are You?", another standard, gets a sparkling and finger-snapping rendition.

There are many and varied types of blues. A definite series of chord progressions determines the blues. However, the blues can be slow or swift, sweet or sad and mirthful or melancholy. There are two blues in "Cookin' Sherry." The album title tune is a happy blues. "Mellow Blues" is a more soulful expression of the classic jazz form.

If you have a taste for sherry, don't go to the trouble of preparing it yourself. It's much easier and tastier to give a listen and let Willis Jackson do the "Cookin' Sherry" for you.

Notes: Howard Cook
 Recording: Rudy Van Gelder
 Supervision: Esmond Edwards

PRESTIGE

PRESTIGE RECORDS, INC., 283 South Washington Ave., Bergenfield, N.J.

COOKIN' SHERRY
WILLIS JACKSON

PRLP 7211 A

HIGH FIDELITY

1. MELLOW BLUES
(Jackson/Jennings/McDuff)
Prestige Music-BMI
2. SPORTIN'
(Jackson/W. Jennings/A. Jennings)
Prestige Music-BMI
3. WHEN I FALL IN LOVE
(Heyman/Young)

LONG PLAYING MICROGROOVE

PRESTIGE

PRESTIGE RECORDS, INC., 203 South Washington Ave., Bergenfield, N.J.

COOKIN' SHERRY
WILLIS JACKSON

PRLP 7211 B

HIGH FIDELITY

LONG PLAYING MICROGROOVE

1. COOKIN' SHERRY
(Willis Jackson - Prestige Music-BMI)
2. WHERE ARE YOU
(Adamson & McHugh)
3. CONTRASTS
(Jimmy Dorsey)