

sions, the two men form a totally wonderful pair of complementary saxophonists, accompanied by Jimmy Rowles (piano), Leroy Vinnegar (double bass) and Mel Lewis (drums) in a quintet formation, supported by producers Norman Granz and Phil Schaap. Released by Verve in 1960, I think that the success of *Gerry Mulligan Meets Ben Webster* is also explained by the fact that the vast majority of the compositions are written and composed by Mulligan, which means that with his intelligence of writing, he was able to direct the project to keep a coherence and establish the most prolific fusion possible. On the other hand, it's true that this album is a little bit cooler jazz than bop. I recommend you at least listen to the first 2 tracks which are *Chelsea Bridge* and *The Cat Walk*, phenomenal standards



Make no mistake about it, the swing and bop start right here on this legendary 1959 session between baritone saxophonist Gerry Mulligan and tenor man Ben Webster. Produced by Norman Granz as an early Verve album. The opening track, Billy Strayhorn's "Chelsea Bridge" is lush and emotional and truly sets the tone for this album. With Jimmy Rowles on piano (his intro on "Sunday" sounds like a ragtimer like Willie "The Lion" Smith just pushed him off the stool before the band came in), Mel Lewis on drums, and the always superb Leroy Vinnegar on bass present and accounted for, the rhythm section is superbly swinging with just the right amount of bop lines and chords in the mix to spice things up. The ghost of Duke Ellington hovers over every note on this record (Billy Strayhorn was one of his main arrangers) and that is a very good thing, indeed. There's a beautiful, understated quality to the music on this session that

makes it the perfect relaxing around the house on a rainy day disc to pop in the player. File this one under cool, very smooth, and supple.

Gerry Mulligan Meets Ben Webster is therefore not a connection by chance, it is in fact a fairly logical sequel according to the paths of each one. On top of that I think the two men liked each other a lot. For my part, by breaking the ice directly, I think it's their best collaborative albums (individually), because they understood each other, tuning each other in an impressive way. Imagine if you're not very familiar with Jazz, that it's like a punk artist making a joint album with a pop artist. It's two worlds that separate. The relaxed atmosphere of Cool Jazz with the liveliness and energy of swing/bop. So yes, it's not the first album to do it, but it's probably the most solid at that time. Recorded at the very end of 1959 over several ses-

Gerry Mulligan Meets Ben Webster

- 1 Chelsea Bridge 7:20
- 2 The Cat Walk 5:44
- 3 Sunday 7:22
- 4 Who's Got Rhythm 7:39
- 5 Tell Me When 5:03
- 6 Go Home 10:01

Baritone Saxophone - Gerry Mulligan Tenor Saxophone - Ben Webster
Bass - Leroy Vinnegar Drums - Mel Lewis Piano - Jimmy Rowles

Recorded by Verve Nov. 3 / Dec. 2, 1959 at Radio Recorders, L.A.

Produced by Norman Granz