



**SONNY
STITT**

**Stitt
Plays
Bird**



Mastered in DSD256

Sonny Stitt forged his own approach to playing bebop out of the sound and style of Charlie Parker, so this tribute album was a very logical project. With fine support from guitarist Jim Hall, pianist John Lewis, bassist Richard Davis, and drummer Connie Kay, Stitt performs ten Parker compositions, plus Jay McShann's "Hootie Blues"; these renditions of "Now's the Time" and "Yardbird Suite" were previously unreleased. Stitt, who mastered bebop and could play hot licks in his sleep, is in top form on such numbers as "Constellation," "Confirmation," and "Ko-Ko," making this an essential item for straight-ahead jazz fans (although the prolific altoist would record eight other albums in 1963 alone). Charlie Parker has had many admirers and his influence can be detected in numerous styles, but few have been as avid a disciple as Sonny Stitt. There was almost note-for-note imitation in several early Stitt solos, and the closeness remained until Stitt began de-emphasizing the alto in favor of the tenor, on which he artfully combined the influences of Parker and Lester Young. Stitt gradually developed his own sound and style, though he was never far from Parker on any alto solo. A wonderful blues and ballad player whose approach influenced John Coltrane, Stitt could rip through an up-tempo bebop stanza, then turn around and play a shivering, captivating ballad. He was an alto saxophonist in Tiny Bradshaw's band during the

early '40s, then joined Billy Eckstine's seminal big band in 1945, playing alongside other emerging bebop stars like Gene Ammons and Dexter Gordon. Stitt later played in Dizzy Gillespie's big band and sextet. He began on tenor and baritone in 1949, and at times was in a two-tenor unit with Ammons. He recorded with Bud Powell and J.J. Johnson for Prestige in 1949, then did several albums on Prestige, Argo, and Verve in the '50s and '60s. Stitt led many combos in the '50s, and re-joined Gillespie for a short period in the late '50s. After a brief stint with Miles Davis in 1960, he reunited with Ammons and for a while was in a three-tenor lineup with James Moody. During the '60s, Stitt also recorded for Atlantic, cutting the transcendent *Stitt Plays Bird*, which finally addressed the Parker question in epic fashion. He continued heading bands, though he joined the Giants of Jazz in the early '70s. This group included Gillespie, Art Blakey, Kai Winding, Thelonious Monk, and Al McKibbon. Stitt did more sessions in the '70s for Cobblestone, Muse, and others, among them another definitive date, *Tune Up*. He continued playing and recording in the early '80s, recording for Muse, Sonet, and *Who's Who in Jazz*. He suffered a heart attack and died in 1982.

Sonny Stitt

Stitt Plays Bird



- 1 Ornithology 3:39
- 2 Scuffle From The Apple 3:48
- 3 My Little Suede Shoes 3:04
- 4 Parker's Mood 4:19
- 5 Au Privave 2:39
- 6 Ko-Ko 4:51
- 7 Confirmation 4:35
- 8 Hootie Blues 6:35
- 9 Constellation 3:16
- Total Time: 36:46

Engineer - Tom Dowd

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