

**Heifetz Box Set: RCA Living Stereo.**

Jascha Heifetz, violin; various orchestras and conductors. Classic Records CR-1000 (9 LPs)



**A**waken a violin aficionado in the middle of the night, shine a flashlight in his face, and demand to know who's the

greatest player on record and the answer you'll get most often is Jascha Heifetz. Listening through the 14 works contained on the nine LPs in Classic's Heifetz Box Set, one can't but be impressed with the musician's way with material ranging from the Classical era through twentieth-century fare. The rap, occasionally, is that Heifetz was affectively cool or aloof. Sure, his playing could be "patrician" and was always emotionally disciplined—but it was never unfeeling and the technical brilliance always served a musical end. This collection includes six pillars of the violin repertoire: the Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Sibelius, and Bruch G minor concertos. I'm glad I don't have to, but I could easily live with Heifetz' as my only version of those pieces.

Heifetz had already been a phenomenon for decades by the time these recordings were made (mostly) in the 1950s, but he was still at the top of his game, and every performance sounds fresh and vital. Take, as one example, the Mendelssohn. The violinist made his public debut with this work at the age of seven yet never seems to be on automatic pilot. Weaknesses? Perhaps the two Mozart works, Concerto No. 4 and the Sinfonie Concertante (with violist William Primrose), seem a little beefy by current standards, but these are still unfailingly musical efforts. Otherwise, Heifetz and his collaborators (including conductors Reiner, Munch, and Sargent; and the Chicago, Boston, and Dallas Symphony Orchestras, among others)

offer stellar readings of the Glazunov Concerto, Prokofiev's G minor, the Bruch *Scottish Fantasy*, and Vieuxtemps' Concerto No. 5. Especially welcome is Classic's inclusion of LSC-2767, which holds Miklós Rózsa's Concerto, written for Heifetz, and Arthur Benjamin's beautifully constructed *Romantic Fantasy*.

Classic has previously released all nine albums as 180-gram records—its Web site indicates all are "out of stock"—and those who own them will want to know how they compare to the new set, pressed on Classic's Quix SV-P vinyl formulation. I had one of the earlier discs on hand (the Sibelius, LSC-2435) and must acknowledge that the 200-gram version sounds significantly better—the violin tone is purer and more focused and there's a more capacious sound field. Classic is producing only 500 of these sets and anticipates that they'll become "collectors items." They probably will. I ardently hope, though, that those who invest the \$300 to get one will not just keep it on a shelf as a trophy. These records should be listened to, and often. They represent a true pinnacle of musicianship, and an apex of the recording art.

ANDREW QUINT

(As it turns out, Classic is releasing all nine of these LPs individually.)

**Cannonball Adderley: *Something Else*. Alfred Lion, original producer; Rudy Van Gelder, original engineer; Bernard Grundman, remastering. Classic Records/Blue Note 1595 (200-gram LP, mono)**



**S**omething Else is one of the great, lyrical blowing jazz albums of all time, with Cannonball Adderley's gospel-drenched alto sax testifying on standards ("Autumn Leaves," "Love for Sale," "Dancing in the Dark"), Miles Davis

prancing on eggshells in a rare stint as sideman, Sam Jones anchoring the bass line, and Art Blakey klook-a-mopping the drumset. Still, it's legitimate to ask how many times Classic Records needs to put out this recording. So far, it's done a "96/24" digital audio disc (playable on DVD machines only), a 180-gram vinyl LP with a bonus album of two songs cut at 45rpm ("Autumn Leaves" and a deleted track, "Alison's Uncle"), and now a choice of two 200-gram LPs, one stereo, the other mono. If you've already bought any of these reissues, neither of the two new takes is so much better to warrant purchase. But if you haven't, the mono is definitely the way to go.

*Something Else* was recorded in 1958, in many ways Van Gelder's peak era, but the stereo in those days was often pseudo, with both horns blaring from the left speaker, the drums crackling from the right speaker, the piano and the bass dead center. From a spatial perspective alone, mono—with everybody front and center—strikes me as preferable. Besides that, on this mono pressing, the bass is more distinct, the cymbals crisper, and the nuances of Miles' trumpet—the shape of a sixteenth note, the shimmer of a decay—more distinct. These details aren't as clear or lively as they are on the 45rpm, but that disc covered only two songs and is now discontinued. I wouldn't be surprised if, in the next round of re-releases, Classic comes out with LPs cut to 200 grams, in mono, and at 45rpm. If you can't wait till then, this is the one to get. FRED KAPLAN

**Norah Jones: *Come Away With Me*. Arif Marden, producer. Classic Records/Blue Note JP 5004**



**T**he slow-burn success of Norah Jones' debut *Come Away With Me*—with its jazz-pop elegance and soulful, unadorned



Norah Jones

vocals—made it a natural for the Classic Records white-gloves treat-

ment. For the LP release, Bernie Grundman cut the lacquer on his all-tube lathe; the finished product was approved by the album's original producer, Arif Marden.

The surfaces of Classic's 200 gram "flat profile" super-vinyl pressing are ultra-quiet and utterly pitch-stable. Though the LP boasts a moderately wider soundstage than the Blue Note CD, it can't do much to deepen the digital disc's flat perspective. The vinyl pressing does unveil, and even highlight, the recording's microphone colorations, especially the golden "whoosh" of lower-treble

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boost on Jones' vocals. For example, the sleeky "When Will I See You Again?" comes off warmer, more sensuous and spacious. On "Lonestar," the harmony vocals are more clearly delineated.

Still, the LP and CD are in a horse race when it comes to transient speed. I could get along happily enough with the cooler, drier CD, which, in any case, wins by a nose for dynamic range. But the LP has the advantages of warmer presence, better harmonic cohesion, and more natural sibilance. Plus, the gatefold cover is gorgeous. If you've got a turntable, why settle?

NEIL GADER

*We also review 180-gram LPs of Pink Floyd's The Dark Side of the Moon and John Lee Hooker's Boogie Chillin' along with their SACD companions in the New Formats section.*