

AURAL GRATIFICATION

BEYOND RETRO

Retro has come to mean revisiting the '70s and disco, but some new CDs take us further back

▼
by Aaron Bong



From left: Betty Hutton, Keely Smith and Dinah Shore

VARIOUS ARTISTS Big Bands in Hi-Fi, Vol. 2

Wow! What a compilation! Every big band number my grandparents love to listen to on their oldies station is in here. *In the Mood*, *Song of India*, *Lover Come Back to Me!*, *Begin the Beguine*, *Sentimental Journey*, and *Lullaby of Birdland* are all included, with plenty more.

All of the recordings are remastered from the actual originals, and are conducted by some of the best names in the big band era like Benny

fact that some of the songs—*It Had to Be You*, *My Funny Valentine*, *Lover Come Back to Me!*—have been done by so many different artists proves the strength of their lyrical and musical content. With a great voice singing them, they are enhanced to the point of excellence.

The Keely Smith CD is the one that didn't really sparkle for me, though. Smith just doesn't stand out in the way that Hutton and Shore do. Her version of *Stormy Weather* is great, and so is *You Go to My Head*, but beyond that nothing really jumped out to grab me.

VARIOUS ARTISTS Hooray for Love: Capitol's Great Gentlemen of Song

This is the ultimate collection of classic love songs. Before Andy Bell crooned *Oh l'Amour* or Sophie B. Hawkins exclaimed *Damn, I Wish I Was Your Lover* people used to listen to the likes of Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett tell them of love.

On this compilation, culled from the vaults of Capitol Records, all the songs are the older songs of love. Lou Rawls sings *Stormy Weather*, Sammy Davis Jr. tells us *You Are My Lucky Star*, and Chet Baker pokes fun at *My Funny Valentine*.

Truly, though, either you love them or you don't. No in between. The Capitol "Spotlight On" series focuses on some of the individual gentlemen of song; look for reviews in next issue's column.

PRICK UP YOUR EARS: Watch for Melissa Etheridge coming soon in concert. Garth Brooks' lesbian sister, Betsy Smittle (his bass player), will be releasing her first solo album soon. And the return of Dee-Lite to the City of Roses is destined to happen shortly. Maybe Lady Kier will be clean enough to be enjoyable this time. Then again...

- ▲ Been there, done that
- ▲▲ Buy it used if you really want it
- ▲▲▲ It's in fashion this season
- ▲▲▲▲ Timeless and flawless

MUSIC

Goodman, Duke Ellington and Count Basie.

Sure, big band music doesn't appeal to everyone, but most people I know enjoy the talent and the sound of this time period. Skeptical? Just look at the success of Harry Connick Jr.

An incredible collection, perfect for that big-band itch in all of us.

DINAH SHORE/BETTY HUTTON/KEELY SMITH Great Ladies of Song, Spotlight On...

All three CDs are beautiful. The true essence of each performer is perfectly captured at the peak of their careers.

Of the three, I most enjoyed the Betty Hutton collection. Her vocals gave me those warm-fuzzy chills. Like when you hear mom singing in the other room when you go visiting. (Only for some of us, this might not be an entirely pleasant memory.)

Included on this CD are *Love Is the Darkest Thing*, *It Had to Be You*, *Doin' It the Hard Way*, and the newly popular (since Bette Midler brought it back), *Stuff Like That There*. Listening to Betty Hutton is incredibly refreshing. A matinee idol surviving after all of these years through her voice.

The Dinah Shore CD is a treat as well. I enjoyed it almost as much as the Hutton compilation. Shore sounds great in these recordings. The



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