

MATT HOLBORN

For Stuff

Stuff Smith is the unsung grandfather of jazz violin. A master of swing and a composer and improviser with an unmistakable sound. This album is my tribute to his music and the lasting effect he has had on me and our little world of jazz violin.

Listen

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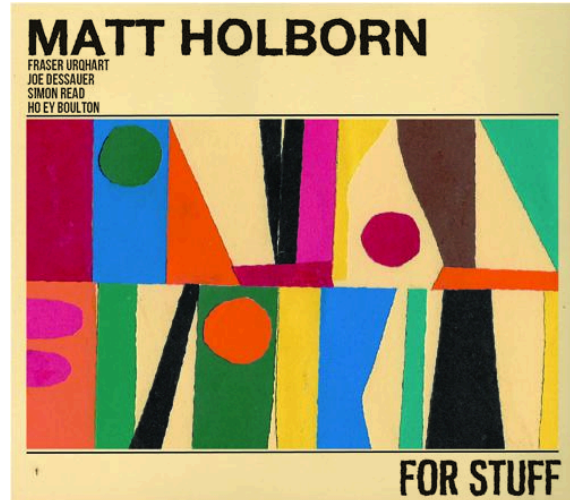
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<https://youtu.be/MKimRfaMsb0?si=l6PMe7jyHFAWzZ5W>



1. Yune' June (M.Holborn) 3.21
2. Squawkin (M.Holborn) 4.31
3. Desert Sands (S.Smith) 5.06
4. Fable (M.Holborn) 4.34
5. Centre Left (M.Holborn) 3.26
6. Stop-Look (S.Smith) 3.49
7. Big Red (M.Holborn) 3.57
8. Avon (M.Holborn) 2.59
9. I Don't Stand A Ghost Of a Chance with You (V.Young) 5.15

Runtime: 36 minutes and 48 seconds.

Recorded, mixed and mastered by
Benedic Lamind at The Fish Factory
London

Matt Holborn-violin
Fraser Urquhart-piano
Joe Dessauer-drums
Simon Read-bass
Honey Boulton-guitar (Tracks 3, 6 and 8)

Liner notes by Anthony Barnett (Stuff Smiths Biographer)

Matt Holborn's *For Stuff* is a wonderful tribute. It's almost possible to envisage these pieces as previously unknown Stuff Smith takes, for they are as fresh as possible while paying non-imitative homage to how Stuff himself played. Each time Smith performed the "same" tune, it was never truly the same. There are only two actual Smith compositions in this set: "Desert Sands," in which it might be said guitarist Honey Boulton is heard playing somewhere between Barney Kessel and Herb Ellis, both of whom Stuff recorded the tune with in 1957, and "Stop Look." Yet traces of Smith can be heard elsewhere too: notably, Matt's "Yune' June" is pretty much a contrafact of "Ain't She Sweet" (Ager, Yellen), recorded a couple of times by Smith in Europe. Smith also recorded Victor Young's "I Don't Stand a Ghost of a Chance With You" (lyrics by Ned Washington and Bing Crosby).

I've always considered "Desert Sands" to be a major signature of Smith's, and it pains me to recall how, at a club just outside Copenhagen, when Smith asked me what I would like him to play, I called for "Take the 'A' Train" when I could have called for "Desert Sands." One of several retrospectively important questions I failed to ask him was why he never played this wonderful composition again after his permanent move to Europe in 1965.

The remaining tunes in this set are Matt's originals. "Big Red" was Stuff's affectionate name for his favorite violin. It was based on a Guarnerius and not too long ago, with the help of violinist David Schulman, it was established as the work of Bernard J. LeBlond of Battle Creek, Michigan, made in 1946 under Smith's oversight. It is now owned by Dutch-Surinamese violinist Yannick Hiwat.

"Fable" is named after AB Fable: Violin Improvisation Studies, the CD label which has released scarce and previously unissued recordings by Smith, Eddie South, and many others. Now revealed, I believe for the first time in writing, "Fable" consists of my initials "AB" surrounded by the first and last letters of "fiddle." But, hold on a minute, Hezekiah Stuff, forgive me, for here's what you said on a 1967 tape for the opening of your unfinished autobiography, *The Human Side of Jazz*: "Number one. I am a violinist. I'm not a fiddle player. [laughter] I'm a violinist. I play the violin my way. That's the way I think it should be played. I mean according to the type of music that I play."

I haven't said too much about Matt's playing or about his wonderful musicians. Smith also said, elsewhere: "And then the greatest thing of all—Music. And, Man, here I can't tell you anything at all because music starts when words leave off and who tries to talk words about it is missing the whole point."

Matt Holborn's *For Stuff* is a warm, affectionate, and original tribute. *Stop Look? Listen.*

Anthony Barnett

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