

SARAH VAUGHAN  
SWEET 'N' SASSY



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1. I Didn't Know About You
2. More Than You Know
3. Thanks For The Ride
4. Come Spring
5. I Wish I Were In Love Again
6. Lazy Afternoon
7. Just Married Today
8. Something I Dreamed Last Night
9. I Got Rhythm
10. This Can't Be Love
11. Slowly
12. Just You, Just Me
13. This Can't Be Love (alternate take)

STEREO

SARAH VAUGHAN

SWEET 'N' SASSY



Arranged and Conducted by LALO SCHIFRIN

1. **I Didn't Know About You** 3:42  
(D. Ellington-B. Russell)

2. **More Than You Know** 3:35  
(Youmans-Rose-Elicsu)

3. **Thanks For The Ride** 3:10  
(R. Alfred-B. Ford)

4. **Come Spring** 2:21  
(Miller-Stevens)

5. **I Wish I Were In Love Again** 2:25  
(R. Rodgers-L. Hart)

6. **Lazy Afternoon** 2:51  
(J. LaTouche-Moross)

7. **Just Married Today** 4:22  
(R. Alfred-A. Frisch)

8. **Something I Dreamed Last Night** 4:42  
(Fain-Yellen-Magidson)

9. **I Got Rhythm** 1:53  
(G. Gershwins-I. Gershwin)

10. **This Can't Be Love** 1:35  
(R. Rodgers-L. Hart)

11. **Slowly** 3:31  
(D. Raksin-K. Goell)

12. **Just You, Just Me** 2:09  
(J. Greer-R. Klages)

13. **This Can't Be Love**\* (alternate take) 1:33  
(R. Rodgers-L. Hart)

\*previously unissued

#### ARRANGED BY LALO SCHIFRIN

Produced by Teddy Reig

Reissue produced by Michael Cuscuna  
Recorded at Universal Studios, Chicago  
in late June, 1963

Remixed from the original three-track masters  
and mastered in 24-bit by Malcolm Addey at  
the Malcolm Addey Studio, New York City

#1-12 originally issued on Roulette SR-52112.  
Reissue art direction and design by Bob Defrin

**IN THE 1959 MOVIE** *Pillow Talk*, Rock Hudson's duplex apartment featured a remote-controlled record player, ready to add a sultry instrumental backdrop as soon as his date curled up on the sofa and batted her eyes. This was the era of "mood music" – a cloud-like confection of strings, perfect for relaxation or seduction. Orchestral wallpaper, it was as crucial to a well-appointed bachelor pad as an Eames chair or a ficus tree, and for years it sold millions of albums.

The mood-music sound spread everywhere, from chic restaurants to dentists' offices; it even found its way into the recordings of top jazz singers like Sarah Vaughan. A star in her field since the '40s, Vaughan had interrupted a long-term association with the Mercury label to join Roulette, a gangster-connected company that had offered her more money. Among her 14 albums for Roulette, made from 1960 to 1963, the solid jazz dates are outnumbered by the make-out discs: *Dreamy*, *Snowbound*, *Star Eyes*, *You're Mine You*, *The Lonely Hours*, and others. *Sweet 'N' Sassy*, her last LP for the label, wrapped her in the velvet sounds of Boris "Lalo" Schifrin, the arranger-composer of everything from the "Gillespiana Suite" (written for Dizzy Gillespie) to '60s action-film soundtracks (*Cool Hand Luke*, *The Liquidator*) to the theme of TV's *Mission: Impossible*.

Not even Schifrin's most candied arrangements overwhelmed the voice of Sarah Vaughan. Operatic in scope and tied to an endless flow of harmonic ideas, it carried out her every whim with liquid ease. Vaughan had two nicknames, "Sassy" and "The Divine One"; on this album she adopts the latter, singing mostly in a mezzo-soprano range and showing off her diva-like head tones and luxuriant vibrato. Vaughan's Roulette years were a controversial time in her recording career. Critics faulted her for an increasingly coy, mannered approach and for "selling out" artistically. "Miss Vaughan seems to be moving farther away from jazz with each album," wrote Harvey Pekar in *Down Beat*. Ever since her country-flavored top-ten single of 1959, *Broken-Hearted Melody*, record producers had tried to squeeze more hits out of her. The efforts failed, although one tune, "Serenata," nipped at the bottom of the charts in 1960. In the meantime, she had entered the swankier supper clubs, notably the Empire Room of New York's Waldorf-Astoria hotel, with an act staged by choreographer Nick Castle. For Vaughan, who liked to "blow" on comfortable songs in a loose trio setting, moving and speaking on cue was a strain. She later told her friend, illustrator Robert Richards, about one of those directed shows. In the middle of "Lover Man," she remembered that she was supposed

to be “performing,” not just singing. Reaching the line “Lover man, oh where can you be?” Vaughan raised a hand to her eyebrows and peered out into the audience, turning her head from left to right.

By 1963 her Roulette contract had nearly run out, and Teddy Reig, the label’s A&R man, was recording her like mad. Before she left for Chicago to play the Palmer House hotel, Reig arranged for her to make an orchestral album there. To conduct he chose Lalo Schifrin, who had just finished a two-year stint as Dizzy Gillespie’s pianist. Schifrin adored Vaughan; as a student in his native Buenos Aires and at the Paris Conservatory he had collected her records, and later he played a few gigs with her. At a preliminary meeting in New York for *Sweet ‘N’ Sassy*, Schifrin was presented with 12 songs. Vaughan gave him her highest and lowest notes, then flew to Chicago, leaving everything else to him. It all happened so quickly that he wrote one of the arrangements on the plane. In the studio, Schifrin led a string section drawn from the Chicago Symphony, combined with local rhythm and horn players. Personnel listings couldn’t be found for this reissue, and Schifrin couldn’t recall any names.

Vaughan had no lead sheets to sing from, but she breezed through even the trickiest charts, utterly relaxed. “She was an all-around musician, she was not only a singer,” Schifrin explained. “She sat at the piano and played the chords. I told her, ‘Working with you is like working with Diz.’ She liked that.” For all her “divine” reputation, he found her quite undiva-like. “She was like one of the cats,” Schifrin said. “She knew how much she was worth, but she didn’t have a superstar complex. She was very simple in the way she treated people, very warm. When I see some of the so-called stars today in any field of music, they take themselves too seriously. I think that people like Sarah and Dizzy should be an example of humility. Ella was the same way.” But Vaughan certainly had a sense of humor. At one point Schifrin told the orchestra: “OK, let’s go for a take.” With his thick Argentinian accent, it sounded more like: “OK-ie, lay go fo ay takey.” He glanced at the isolation booth, but couldn’t see Vaughan; she was down on the floor, laughing.

Usually a song’s musical possibilities, not its words, were her focus, but Vaughan’s singing had such innate drama that she could set a mood instantly. In “Lazy Afternoon,” her voice floats as gracefully as a dove over soft pizzicato strings, spaciouly scored to give her lots of room. David Raksin (of “Laura” fame) and lyricist Kermit Goell wrote “Slowly” for the 1945 film noir, *Fallen Angel*. Changing hardly a note of the melody – a sign she didn’t know the

song too well – Vaughan dazzles through sheer vocal beauty. Roy Alfred and Al Frisch’s “Just Married Today” is a weepy little melodrama that she delivers with tongue-in-cheek pathos.

For jazz lovers, the big-band charts will hold more interest. “This Can’t Be Love” ends with a roller-coaster of modulations that Vaughan mastered on the spot. A previous take, released here for the first time, shows how she could reconceive a song with every performance. “I Got Rhythm” allows her to truly cut loose. “She didn’t have a clue what I was going to do,” said Schifrin. “I started with her alone a capella, snapping her fingers – that was my idea. And then to fade out with the Afro-Cuban ending – these were just crazy ideas that I knew she could do.”

Vaughan’s second husband and manager, Clyde (C.B.) Atkins, was there too. Atkins, who claimed to be a former pro football player, had made the papers in October when Vaughan filed for divorce, charging “physical and mental cruelty” and claiming that Atkins had repeatedly threatened her life. Months later, he was still acting as her go-between. Recalled Schifrin: “He was coming with messages the next day, like, ‘The arrangement you’ve done for “More Than You Know,” Lalo, is outrageous!’ That meant, out of this world. I don’t think he knew too much about music. So this had to come from Sarah.”

After the third and final session, Playboy mogul Hugh Hefner invited Vaughan, Reig and Schifrin to a party he threw at the Playboy Mansion in Chicago. Then they all went their separate ways. Schifrin didn’t work with Vaughan again until 1984, when he went to Dusseldorf to conduct a concert in which she sang the poems of John Paul II.

*Sweet ‘N’ Sassy* hadn’t been released until well into 1964. By then Schifrin was composing film scores for MGM and Vaughan was back at Mercury, recording Dionne Warwick and Petula Clark covers and too little jazz. Her album with Schifrin, alas, wasn’t much noticed. But it still has its retro pleasures. Roll out the leopard-skin rug and let Vaughan and Schifrin transport you to the bachelor pad of your dreams.

— James Gavin, New York City, 2001

*James Gavin’s work has appeared in the New York Times and the Village Voice.*

*Alfred A. Knopf will publish his biography of Chet Baker in 2001.*



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