

## Spins and Needles

# Mighty Nice Things Happen When Ketty Lester Sings

By WILLIAM BUCHANAN

Somewhere on your list of talented female singers, please reserve a spot for Ketty Lester. This girl is such a great talent and is improving with each passing release.

If at the moment you're uncertain about her work, reserve a final opinion until you listen to both sides of her latest RCA-Victor LP entitled, "Where Is Love?"

In this set of a dozen songs, we become more aware of this singer's delicate phrasing, warmth, feeling than in all the other records she's made in the past years, including her disc click of "Love Letters," recorded several years ago.

Ketty Lester is a West Coast gal, but is still familiar to hi-fi addicts in New York, Boston and Philly and about a year ago she sang at The Monticello in Framingham.

We first heard her sing some 10 years ago on the old NBC-TV show, "America after Dark." Paul Coates presented her on a remote from San Francisco. I can't remember what she sang, but I know she sang it well.

Since that time she's recorded for a couple of different labels and also starred in the off-Broadway production of "Cabin in the Sky."

Ketty's singles are winning some attention and that means her album sales should improve as more and more people learn about this vocalist and the nice things that happen whenever she sings.

Even if the incredible happened . . . you didn't care for her work . . . the gal is a real looker and her albums are suitable for framing.

Some of the selections in this LP are, "Deep Purple," "My Foolish Heart," "That's All," "The Sweetest Sounds" and, of course, the title song of the album, one of the numbers from the musical, "Oliver."

"Joe's Blues," a Verve release, offers an odd-appearing combination that turns out remarkably well. This couples organist Wild Bill Davis with two of Duke's old standbys, Johnny Hodges and Lawrence Brown, and a fine rhythm section.

Hodges, the leader of the group, and Brown, who only in recent years has won the recognition he always rated as a jazz artist, are faultless as always. Everything they play has taste, style and drive and who could ask for anything more?

The organ has been recorded infrequently as a jazz instrument (though Fats Waller did so more than 35 years ago) and still sounds a trifle strange to unaccustomed ears, despite the recent inroads made by Jimmy Smith, Johnny "Hammond" Smith and Shirley Scott.

But Davis definitely swings. We still love his "Lullaby of Birdland" and "April in Paris." His playing is never obtrusive, whether in solos or background and he melds perfectly with the group.

The tunes played include the way-back Ellington favorites, "Warm Valley," and "Solitude" and one of his lesser-known tunes, "Harmony in Harlem," two original blues and three good standards.

The legendary Charlie Parker died in March, 1955, and so last March in memory of the 10th anniversary of his passing, some of the fellows who knew Bird and who worked with him in the '40s and '50s, got together in Carnegie Hall in New York city for a memorial concert.

This concert was recorded and is now available on the Limelight label with eloquent liner notes by Nat Hentoff.

Among the message musicians who took part in the activity that night were Dizzy Gillespie, Lee Konitz, James Moody, Tommy Potter, Roy Eldridge, Roy Haynes, Kenny Dorham, Coleman Hawkins and others, many of whom were contemporaries of Bird's when he was flying high.

And it was a delightful surprise to hear Dave Lambert's scat vocal on "Donna Lee," a Parker original. Lambert is a Cambridge boy (Rindge Tech) who did some wonderful things with Gene Krupa (remember "What's This?") as well as his own groups before singing and swinging to other successes with the Lambert-Hendricks-Ross group and later with Lambert-Hendricks-Bevan. And Konitz and Moody were with it the night this concert was held.

It's a plus album all the way as these men worked just a little harder than usual to salute one of the greats.