

The
TENORSAX
of
VITO PRICE
“VITO PIZZO”

Born: NY. ca. 1930
Died: ?? no info

Introduction:

Quite easy, just play any of his few recorded contributions, and you will agree that Vito Price was one tenorsax player with a great potential, just the right artist for a solography! My decision was made after I heard his only vintage LP "Swingin' The Loop"!

History:

Played altosax and tenorsax since he was 14. During his high school days he worked with jazz groups in the New York area. After high school, he served an apprenticeship on the road, with the bands of Bob Chester, Art Mooney, Tony Pastor, and with Chubby Jackson's small group. In 1951 he entered the marines and spent two years serving in a marine band. He enrolled at the Manhattan school of music in 1953 and stayed on for two years, supplementing his studies with work as leader of his own group and as a member of Jerry Wald's band. In the summer of 1955 he came to Chicago. In February 1956 he joined the staff orchestra at station WGN and has been a member of the orchestra at least until the Argo recording session (unknown source). Nothing is known of his life after that, except that he recorded in 2003.

VITO PRICE SOLOGRAPHY

BILL RUSSO & HIS ORCHESTRA**Chi. May 6, 1956**

Bigband personnel including Vito Price and many others (reeds).

One title, "The World Of Aleina: Ballet Music" with five movements was recorded for Atlantic, but no jazz soli, no VP.

CHUBBY JACKSON & HIS ORCHESTRA**Chi. March 31, 1957**

Don Geraci, John Howell, Don Jacoby, John Silva (tp), Cy Touff (b-tp), Bill Harris, Tom Shepard (tb), Howard Davis (as), Sandy Mosse, Vito Price (ts), Bill Calkins (bar), Marty Rubenstein (p), Remo Biondi, Jimmy Gourley (g), Chubby Jackson (b, ldr), Don Lamond (dm).

Ten titles were recorded for Argo, seven issued, five have tenorsax soli, the following three believed to be by VP:

8460	Tiny's Blues	Solo 24 bars (2 nd (ts)-solo). (FM)
8462	Mother Knickerbocker	Solo 24 bars (2 nd (ts)-solo). (FM)
8463	Keester Parade	Solo 12 bars (2 nd (ts)-solo). (S)

Great bigband session, don't miss it!! The two tenorsax players are excellent, and both could deserve his solography. VP is the one with the darkest tone, taking a beautiful slow blues on "... Parade", otherwise swinging easily in upper tempo.

CHUBBY JACKSON & HIS ORCHESTRA**Chi. Nov. 4, 1957**

Don Geraci, John Howell, Don Jacoby, Bill Hanley, John Silva, Porky Panico (tp), Cy Touff (b-tp), Bill Harris, George Jean, Paul Krum (tb), Howard Davis (as), Sandy Mosse, Vito Price (ts), Bill Calkins (bar), Marty Rubenstein (p), Remo Biondi (g), Chubby Jackson (b), Don Lamond (dm), Jackie Paris (vo).

Eleven titles were recorded for Argo, two have tenorsax soli, believed to have VP:

	New York To Chicago	Solo 18 bars (1 st (ts)-solo). (M)
	Mister Duff	Solo with orch 28 bars. (M)

Two strong soli here, but alas so few for a full session!

TONY PASTOR & HIS ORCHESTRA**NYC. 1958**

Bigband personnel including Tony Pastor (cl, ts, vo), Dave Figg (ts, arr), Vito Price (ts).

Twelve titles were recorded for Roulette, issued as "Let's Dance With Tony Pastor", three have tenorsax soli:

	Robin Hood	Possibly solo 6 bars. (SM)
	Sweet Lorraine	Unlikely solo 2 bars. (S)
	Tony's Chance	Possibly solo 16 bars. Unlikely solo 6 bars. (M)

This is mostly nice dance music with vocal, and only "... Chance" is interesting from a jazz point-of-view. Possibly VP is taking some of these tenorsax soli, difficult to say.

VITO PRICE**Chi. Jan. 20, 1958**

Vito Price (ts), Lou Levy (p), Freddie Green (g), Max Bennett (b), Gus Johnson (dm).

Five titles were recorded for Argo, issued as "Swingin' The Loop":

	Time After Time	Solo 48 bars to long coda. (S)
	Eye Strain	Solo 6 choruses of 12 bars. 24 bars 4/4 with (dm) to straight 24 bars. (F)
	Beautiful Love	Intro 8 bars to solo/straight 3 choruses of 32 bars. Solo/straight 32 bars to coda. (FM)
	Credo	Soli 32 and 8 bars to long coda. (S)
	As Long As I Live	Straight 16+8 bars, (p) on bridge, to solo 32 bars. Solo 36 bars to coda. (M)

This LP and particularly this quintet session is one of the really great surprises in my continuous search for unknown but great jazz artists. VP's beautiful ballad versions of "Time ..." and "Credo" are firmly in the tradition and style of the best white tenorsax players at this time, and the emotional quality of his music is amazing. One might argue that with this rhythm section, anyone could play great, but joke aside, listen to how swings the medium tempo on "... Live"! Adding that he also treats the upper tempi of "... Love" and the blues on "... Strain" (a VP composition) with confidence and inspiration as if his presence in a recording studio was an everyday experience, the conclusion is that VP is a major discovery! Quoting Don Gold, Down Beat Magazine: "Vito Price isn't famous. He isn't the world's finest saxophonist. He isn't suffering from the pangs of public disapproval. He isn't a newly-discovered figure out of the past. To state it simply, he is a musician satisfied to play the way he wants to play. He's not attempting to set precedents or unify forms or set inspirational harmonic patterns. When I asked him about this LP, his first as a leader, he said, "I'm thrilled that I finally got the chance to record. I felt ready. This is my idea of happy, swinging music".

VITO PRICE

Chi. Jan. 25, 1958

John Powell, Bill Hanley (tp), Paul Crumbaugh (tb), Barrett O'Hara (b-tb), Vito Price (as, ts), Bill Calkins (bar), Lou Levy (p), Remo Biondi (g), Max Bennett (b), Marty Clausen (dm), Bill McRae (arr).

Five titles were recorded for Argo, issued as "Swingin' The Loop":

Swinging The Loop	Break to solo 64 bars. Solo 20 bars. (FM)
Mousey's Tune	Soli 32, 4 and 4 bars. (FM)
Why Was I Born?	Intro 4 bars to solo with orch 32 bars. Solo with orch 16 bars to coda. (SM)
Duddy	Straight 12 bars. Solo with orch 5 choruses of 12 bars. (SM)
In A Mellow Tone	(as)-Solo with orch 64 bars. (M)

An excellent follow-up session to the one five days earlier! An augmented personnel gives new challenges, but excellent arrangements seem to inspire VP to, again, produce five amazing sides. Rarely if ever has any jazz musician made such one-time recordings, come and gone. All items are excellent, "... Loop" and "Duddy" are his compositions, note also his only altosax appearance on "... Tone". Slightly staccato in phrasing, VP makes an unforgettable impression on at least this listener. Why he never got another chance is an enigma. VP's own thoughts on the Argo sessions are: "I had wanted to record so badly, I guess I never had been at the right place at the right time. This is my first opportunity. And I was given a clear road to do just what I wanted to do. I'm not a far out musician. I'm not trying to blaze new paths. These sides are pure, clean and honest. I just tried to swing. I play because I like to play. I dig it".

JAMES MOODY

Chi. Sept. 13-16, 1958

Bigband personnel including James Moody (fl, as, ts), Vito Price, Sandy Mosse, Eddie Johnson (ts).

Ten titles were recorded for Argo, but all tenorsax soli are by James Moody.

TONY PASTOR & HIS ORCHESTRA

NYC. Jan. 1959

Bigband personnel including Tony Pastor (cl, ts, vo), Al Cohn (ts, arr), Vito Price (ts).

Twelve titles were recorded for Everest, issued as "P. S. Tony Pastor Plays And Sings Artie Shaw", nine have tenorsax soli, "Begin The Beguine", "Frenesi", "Moonglow" "Any Old Time" and "Nightmare" by TP, while with regard to VP:

Traffic Jam	Unlikely solo 8 bars. Duet with (ts-AC) 64 bars. (F)
Back Bay Shuffle	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
Indian Love Call	Unlikely solo 14 bars. (M)
Summit Ridge Drive	Unlikely solo with orch 24 bars. (SM)

Tony Pastor's oldfashioned style seems to be easy to identify, and I believe I have got the two other great tenorsax guys right: AC on the brief solo on "... Jam", "... Call" and "... Drive", VP on "... Shuffle", with a strong tenorsax battle on "... Jam".

TONY PASTOR & HIS ORCHESTRA**Las Vegas, 1960**

Bigband personnel including Vito Price (ts), Tony Pastor (vo).

Thirteen titles were recorded live for Capitol at Stardust Hotel, issued as "Shakin' Up Las Vegas", two have VP:

Oh Marie	Solo 64 bars. (F)
Somebody Stole My Gal	Solo 40 bars. (F)

I guess 99 out of 100 tenorsax fans would bypass this CD, but there are moments of cooking here, and those two fast items mentioned with great vocals sandwiching tenorsax solo are really well worth spending time with. I have played these several times and love them. Pastor says "Vito" before the solo on "... Gal", and "... Marie"'s solo is obviously by the same man, so there is no doubt about VT's presence here. A great swinger, why didn't he got a big name!?

After more than 40 years, VP reappears on the following CD:

VITO PIZZO**2003**

Vito Price alias Vito Pizzo (birth name) (sop-item 1, as-item 9, ts-remaining items), unknown (p), unknown (g-items 1-3,7-10), (strings-items 1,3,6,8,10).

Ten titles were recorded for Scantalia Productions:

1	Day Dream	5:55. (S/M)
2	In The Wee Small Hours	4:30. (S)
3	Only Trust Your Heart	4:33. (M)
4	In A Sentimental Mood	3:48. (S)
5	It Might As Well Be Spring	5:38. (F)
6	Some Other Time	4:44. (S)
7	Things Ain't What They UTB	3:36. (M)
8	My Ship	7:35. (S/M)
9	There'll Never Be Another You	4:37. (FM)
10	'S Wonderful	3:25. (FM)

I must admit I was pretty skeptical when I learned about this session, but I was surprised and pleased when I recently heard it. VP seems to be in good shape, quite able to play professionally. I wonder how the whole thing came about? How come strings were available? Who are the fine piano and guitar players? The slow tunes like "... Mood" have fine feeling, and the best sections of "Things ...", "... Heart ..." and "... Spring" confirm the assumption that VP has been active and playing somewhere and kept his technique alive in all those years. VP could in my opinion been one of the great ones on his instrument.

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