

Mp3 George Gee Big Band - Settin' The Pace



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Great Big Band Swing Jazz from one of New York City's top ensemble. This recording features the music of legendary big band composer/arranger Frank Foster, under his direction. Airplay on jazz and big band stations all around the USA and International. 12 MP3 Songs JAZZ: Big Band, JAZZ: Swing/Big Band

Details: On the first studio recording by his swingin' jazz orchestra, bandleader George Gee turns over his director's baton and the arranging chair to the great arranger/composer Frank Foster. Foster first made a name for himself as a saxophonist and arranger in the organization led by Gee's idol, Count Basie, in the fifties and sixties and following an illustrious career on his own returned to the group as its leader during the eighties and nineties, after the great pianist passed away. Gee's big band has previously recorded Foster's most famous composition, Shiny Stockings, on one of their live albums, so he knew the combination of his group and Foster's music was a heavenly match. Foster treats the band like it was his very own and the resulting music is, in his words, both "happy and swingin'" Gee is understandably proud of his fine ensemble. Their performances of Foster's fine arrangements, most of which have never before been recorded, keeps the Basie and the Foster traditions alive and prove that swing still lives. The date starts off with the classic standard "Out of Nowhere." Foster's arrangement features the smooth flowing saxophone section sound punctuated by crisp staccato screaming exclamations by the brass section that was the hallmark of the Basie band. Trumpeter Mark McGowan and tenor saxophonist Michael Hashim get to shine individually while the rhythm section, with John Cowherd at the piano, Joe Cohn on guitar, Darryl Hall on bass and Willard Dyson at the drums, emulates the loping tempo at which the Basie band excelled, spurring a performance that can be loved equally by listeners and dancers alike. Foster's original, "Settin' The Pace," does just that, with the rhythm relaxing in a Basie groove that is given a real sense of authenticity from Cohn's chugging chords on rhythm guitar, in the tradition of the great Freddie

Green, over Hall's walking bass, while Cowherd displays his affection for the Count's spare spacious piano sound. Eddie Bert, Charles Stephens and Jack Jeffers increase the velocity with their trombone exchanges over the blaring brass propelled by Dyson's drums and Howard Johnson digs deep into his blues bag for an exciting baritone solo before the band brings it all home. Grammy award nominated vocalist Carla Cook steps out in front of the band for Foster's appealing arrangement of Oscar Hammerstein's "Lover Come Back To Me." The vocalist's delicate tone and distinctive diction hearken back to the great "girl singers" of the big band era, most notably Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughn. Foster utilizes flutes in the sax section and mutes in the brass for ducal harmonies in his elegant introduction to Ellington's "In A Sentimental Mood." The beautiful ballad features moving solos from veteran tenor saxophonist Lance Bryant, former Basie band trombonist Robin Trowers and trumpeter Mark McGowan. Mario Bauza's "Mambo Inn," for many years the theme song for Machito's Afro-Cuban Orchestra, was recorded by Basie back in the days when jazz and Latin bands would take turns playing for the dancers in clubs like Roseland and the Palladium. Gee's men demonstrate their facility with the song's Latin rhythms on the exciting arrangement that features Dyson's drums and the conga, bongo and bell of special guest percussionist Renato Thoms. "Ready Now That You Are GG," a dedication to the group's leader, is a straight-ahead swinger that affords rhythm guitarist Joe Cohn and lead trumpeter Walt Szymanski the opportunity to shine as soloists. Alto saxophonist Marshall McDonald and trombonist Robert Trowers, a couple of the band's Basie-ites, also step out from their respective sections to make fine individual statements. Foster's arrangement of his own "Bass In Yo' Face," is a feature for the band's excellent bassist Daryl Hall, who receives strong support in the comping of his rhythm section mates, Cowherd and Cohn. Saxophones and trombones provide sumptuously soft backing to his soulful solo while the trumpets offer some snappy responses. Ray Noble's "The Very Thought Of You" is a feature for Carla Cook, who returns to deliver a particularly romantic reading of the still popular lyric. Once again the young singer displays a remarkably mature way with words, caressing every syllable's cadence to rhythmically emphasize their deeper meaning. Michael Hashim makes his own heartfelt statement on tenor saxophone and the band provides some of its lushest backing. "When Your Lover Is Gone" is arranged by Foster as a full length solo vehicle for Walt Szymanski, who displays a strong affinity for the classic trumpet stylings in the Harry James tradition. Cowherd cleverly inserts a short Basie tag before the trumpeter's crescendoing coda ends this inspired performance. Carla Cook makes her final appearance

on the disc on "Autumn Leaves" -- a highflying swingin' affair that features the singer's expressive scat vocal technique and the band's impressive call and response exchanges. "I Don't Want To Learn To Sing The Blues" by dancer Dawn Hampton is the one arrangement of the date not written by Frank Foster. The group's own tenor saxophonist, Lance Bryant, penned this one in the classic big band blues style and contributes his own smooth lead vocal on the telling lyric that will sound all too familiar to many listeners. The date concludes with Foster's Basie style arrangement of Charlie Parker's classic, "Scrapple From The Apple." Alto saxophonist Ed Pazant and trumpeter Shawn Edmonds show off their bebop chops with hot solos, then alternating trading four and eight bar exchanges with the whole band. Drummer Dyson gives the group a workout on this one and ends the proceedings with a booming downbeat. George Gee has been leading his swingin' big band out of New York, spreading the classic sound of jazz to dancers and listeners all over the world, for more than two decades. The music on *Settin' The Pace* was recorded following a triumphant appearance by the band, under the direction of special guest Frank Foster, at the city's premiere jazz venue, Birdland. The group brought the spirit inspired by that live date into the studio the next day and the result is one of the most exciting big band records recorded in years. Frank Foster says it best when he notes that, "Thanks to the dedication and persistence of leaders like George Gee - swing, happy swing - will be around for a long, long time." Thanks to Frank Foster, Carla Cook, George Gee and all the swingin' men in his big band the music is surely still alive and well in the 21st Century.

Artist Website: GeorgeGee.com Label Website: GJazzRecords.com Reviews: [Karl Stober ejazznews.com](http://KarlStober.ejazznews.com)

Few times ever do I get excited about a project right out of the jewel case but it can happen and did. The George Gee Big Band along with GJazz Records has released a 2004 gem when it comes to the big band resonance and the confidence it reverberates. Featuring the salient voice of Carla Cook this disc is sizzling and introduces that landmark sound with the quality it deserves. Credit goes out to Frank Foster as the arranger and composer. Also, credited with original title cut *Settin' the Pace*. Along with a multi talented ensemble of highly skilled troubadours, the whole project reaps of class! Ed Pazant, Marshall McDonald, Michael Hashim, Lance Bryant, Howard Johnson, Charles Stephens, Robert Trowers, Eddie Bert, Jack Jeffers, Walt Szymanski, Steve Wiseman, Shawn Edmonds, Mark McGowan, Jon Cowherd, Joe Cohn, Daryl Hall, Willand Dyson, and Renato Thoms put together this truly exquisite lesson in the big band genre. *Lover Come Back to Me* features that sensual tone of Carla Cook. She gently but with forethought puts that emotion of heartbreak in this performance. The brass tones in this cut trigger the

appropriate emotions nicely. Ms. Cook also vocalizes in *Autumn Leaves* and *The Very Thought Of You*. Flutes successfully coat the musical canvas engaged around *In A Sentimental Mood*. A ballad that enforces the elegance of the big band era as each tone emulates the style of those thrilling days of yesteryear. Three solos are included in this track. The whole project not only has the feel of Foster but a strong scent of Basie, concluding that this fine project is a complement both in style and respect for their work. *Harvey Siders JazzTimes Magazine 12/04* Many labels come to mind for George Gee's fourth album and first studio session, *Settin' the Pace* (GJazz): straightahead, neoswing, dance band-and none are pejorative. Gee can boast a tight, highly responsive, 17-piece unit-four trumpets, four trombones, five saxes and four in the rhythm section-made even more responsive with tenor saxophonist Frank Foster guiding them. Adding to the good news: 11 of the 12 tunes are Foster's arrangements. Highlights include Lance Bryant's tenor sax solo on "*In a Sentimental Mood*," Joe Cohn's guitar statements on "*Ready Now That You Are GG*" and flugelhornist Walt Szymanski's solo on the same track. Later, Szymanski shows his trumpet chops on "*When Your Lover Has Gone*," both in the art of playing pure melody and improvising. As lead trumpeter, his presence is felt throughout the album. Vocalist Carla Cook has three offerings but scores highest with "*The Very Thought of You*." It's the only one in her lower warmer range, and that's where the Grammy nominee belongs. Jack Bowers allaboutjazz.com George Gee, big band jazz's answer to the Energizer Bunny, just keeps going and going and going... The diminutive New York-based dynamo leads at least two and perhaps as many as four bands. For the neo-swing crowd there's the Jump Jive and Wailers; for dancers there's the Make Believe Ballroom Orchestra; for those who lean toward the legendary Big Band Era there's the George Gee Swing Orchestra (which, when last heard from, was *Swingin' in Swing City Zurich*), and now comes the seventeen-piece George Gee Big Band, *Settin' the Pace* for those who prefer their jazz on the contemporary side of the scale with an album devoted to the compositions and arrangements of former Count Basie stalwart Frank Foster-and on Gee's own label too! There aren't many arrangers who can brighten a band better than Foster, and even though he composed only three of the album's dozen selections ("*Settin' the Pace*," "*Ready Now That You Are GG*," "*Bass in Yo' Face*"), each one is a gem, as are his arrangements of such crowd-pleasers as Ellington's "*In a Sentimental Mood*," Johnny Green's "*Out of Nowhere*," Mario Bauza's "*Mambo Inn*," E.A. Swan's "*When Your Lover Has Gone*" (featuring lead trumpeter/music director Walt Szymanski) and Charlie Parker's "*Scrapple from the Apple*." Foster calls his music "happy swing," and there can be no

more suitable words to describe it. Even though he has been confined to a wheelchair since suffering a stroke, Foster's still happy, and what's more he's still swinging, as anyone who listens to this buoyant studio date can readily appreciate. Also swinging are a number of forceful soloists, including tenor Michael Hashim, alto Ed Pazant, baritone Howard Johnson, trombonist Robert Trowers, trumpeter Mark McGowan, guitarist Joe Cohn, pianist Jon Cowherd and bassist Daryl Hall (a standout on "Bass in Yo' Face"). To ice the cake, Gee has enlisted the services of one of New York's finest, Grammy-nominated vocalist Carla Cook, who further enhances three of Foster's radiant charts-"Lover Come Back to Me," an uptempo "Autumn Leaves," and Ray Noble's "The Very Thought of You." The band's resident "singer," tenor saxophonist Lance Bryant, takes a pleasing turn on his gritty arrangement of Dawn Hampton's down-and-dirty soliloquy, "I Don't Want to Learn How to Sing the Blues." Even though Gee's band isn't Basie, two of his sidemen-trumpeter Shawn Edmonds and saxophonist Marshall McDonald-are members of the current Basie orchestra, and everyone else responds with alacrity to Foster's ebullient music, producing a remarkably snug fit. Of course, it's hard to go astray playing anything that Foster writes, and he gives the band a pretty wide comfort zone in which to operate. Everyone takes advantage, and the result is a sharp, consistently swinging slice of contemporary big band jazz

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