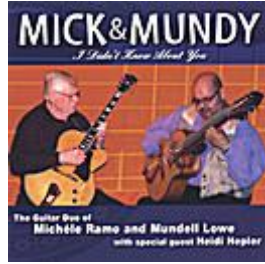


# Mp3 Michele Ramo & Mundell Lowe - Mick & Mundy - 'i Didn't Know About You'



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Elegant, classic jazz guitar duo of two virtuoso artists who blend wonderful melodic lines and exquisite colors of classic standards between Ramo's nylon fingerstyle 8 string guitar and the electric hollow body sound of Lowe. 7 MP3 Songs JAZZ: Traditional Jazz Combo, JAZZ: Swing/Big Band Details: The compact disk you are holding in your hands features two great Southerners, born a generation apart in two very different countries: Italy and the U.S. Both are virtuoso guitarists, who are equally comfortable playing in a variety of settings and in a broad range of musical genres. But here Michele Ramo and Mundell Lowe meet in a setting that lies close to the heart, playing jazz standards, Michele finger picking on his singular 8-string "Hei-D Mostro" by Rich DiCarlo, and Mundell using the plectrum on his Mapson electric hollow body. Michele Ramo is a true original and his story has now been told many times. His musical and spiritual roots lie in the very south of Italy, in the Sicilian seaside town of Mazara Del Vallo, where he first started as a classical violinist, and then took up the guitar as well. For years he was a member of the Italian State Symphony Orchestra in Palermo, but an early infatuation with jazz led him to move to the United States, where he settled in Detroit. In the Motor City he played all kinds of music, including his beloved jazz, and in 1990 he met singer Heidi Hepler, who soon became his wife and also his closest musical partner. Eventually they moved to the East Coast, where they have been constantly expanding their musical horizons, working with a wide range of artists of all generations playing jazz, Brazilian music, and the classics. He continues to explore both instruments, although he clearly favors the company of guitarists, having worked with, among others, Howard Alden, Al Caiola, Les Paul, Gene Bertoncini, Jorge Morel, Carlos Barbosa-Lima, Jack Wilkins, Vic Juris, Wayne Wright, Rodney Jones, Jimmy Bruno, and Frank Vignola. On another soon-to-be released cd he stuck to the violin, accompanied

by the grand guitar master Bucky Pizzarelli, and bassist Jerry Bruno. Here, he switches to guitar, unveiling his new 8-string "Hei-D Mostro". Ever fascinated by the company of other guitarists, he turned for company to another master: Mundell Lowe. Mundell Lowe comes from Lowell, Mississippi (the birthplace of another guitarist and composer, Lloyd Wells), where he learned to play guitar from his father. He began his career playing hillbilly music, but soon gravitated towards jazz, and after doing his military duty he managed to get in on the tail end of the big band era, joining the orchestra of Ray McKinley band in 1945. From his earliest recordings, done with McKinley, it is clear that he had been listening to the single string lines of Charlie Christian and to the boppers, but also to older chordal masters such as Karl Cress. His country roots were not forgotten, however, and came through in the way he attacked rhythm. He seems to share this musical aspect with two of his contemporaries, the Texan Herb Ellis, and Oklahoman Barney Kessel. Lowe soon got off the road and began making a living in the studios and clubs of New York. He played and recorded with singers and instrumentalists, and was one of the few guitarists who got to record with Charlie Parker. In the fifties he made a series of excellent jazz albums under his own name, but he also made appearances on many other recordings by artists such as Ben Webster and Carmen McRae. In the next decade he moved to Los Angeles, where he spent almost twenty years in the studios, playing guitar and scoring films as well as episodes for TV shows, among them Starsky and Hutch, The Wild, Wild, West, and Hawaii 5-0. Having retired from the studios, he now plays all over the world with various musicians, often as part of the Andr Previn Trio. Mundell is married to the wonderful big band singer Betty Bennett. This meeting between Mick and Mundy is a mellow affair-no flag-wavers, no battle of mindless chops, and no superfluous change running. The tunes are comfortable and familiar, each guitarist has a way with both melody and chords, and they know instinctively how to keep out of each others way. The recital begins with the title song, Duke Ellington's lovely I Didn't Know About You, taken at a leisurely pace. Ramo's acoustic guitar provides the verse, and then Lowe states the melody, moving on into a solo, demonstrating his unique manner of shading ballad lines. Ramo is behind him, but one would think that his guitar has been joined by a bassist. Those low notes, however, come from the additional fretless 7 8 strings of his unique instrument. Lowe finishes his turn with a nod to the original melody, and then Ramo offers his own take on the tune, taking what could only be construed as a bass solo on the bridge. Some bass players in New York are going to lose out on gigs because of his new instrument! Then Lowe returns and restates the head, with Ramo on the bridge and the last

chorus, this time on the high strings. The two then exchange phrases, leading to the end. This gentlemanly give and take continues throughout the recital, which continues with a nice stroll through When Sunny Gets Blue. The tempo picks up just slightly again on Duke's Satin Doll. Here Michele takes a longer "bass" solo that fully showcases his fretless bass strings. This is followed by Moonglow, which many of us will always associate with Benny Goodman, who, by the way, was one of Lowe's many employers. I don't know how many times I have heard Michele play L. Bonfá's Manha De Carnaval, but his versions are ever different. Here it is with just the right amount of romantic sadness, with an echo of one of his first great influences, the late Baden Powell. The tempo picks up again for There's a Small Hotel, and then we get something completely different, as the instrumental recital is joined by the exquisite soprano voice of Heidi Hepler and it is back to the South. "Sky meets earth - touching sea..."; this is Sicily, the Ramos' love song to Michele's land of birth. It begins with a recitative, moves on to a gentle poem set to languishing music, and ends with Heidi's patented high register vocalese explorations, culminating with rhythmic jungle sounds. A perfect ending to remind you of il Sud and its rough splendors.

Piotr Michalowski

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