

REVIEWS

WILLIE NELSON & WYNTON MARSALIS FEATURING NORAH JONES



Here We Go Again: Celebrating the Genius of Ray Charles

[Blue Note]

As the old showbiz saying goes, you can't go wrong with good material. So with the timeless songbook of Ray Charles as a source, this live collaboration of three luminaries of jazz, pop and country is a thrill. Cut live at Lincoln Center in February 2009, the set kicks off with a spirited take on "Hallelujah I Love Her So," in which Marsalis' horn section provides a lively counterpoint to Nelson's laconic vocal style. Jones follows with a knee-weakening vocal on the sultry "Come Rain or Come Shine," breathing palpable eroticism into a classic ballad, while Marsalis' combo (and his beautifully phrased solo) pushes her to emotional heights seldom heard on her own albums. By the inevitable finale, a rambling, inspired "What'd I Say" (in which drummer Ali Jackson reminds us why ride cymbals were invented), you'll certainly be impressed by the musicianship and energy of all involved—not to mention the everlasting genius of Ray Charles. —Bob Cannon

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