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[www.BobMcChesney.com](http://www.BobMcChesney.com)

**By Glenn Astarita - All About Jazz.com**

No Laughing Matter

Bob McChesney Quartet (Summit Records)

The legendary humorist and talk show host Steve Allen has also authored nearly 8,000 tunes during his celebrated lifetime. Now in his 70's Allen must be overjoyed with the winning formula represented on this classy and at times – stunning – recording titled, No Laughing Matter – The Bob McChesney Quartet Plays Steve Allen. Here, trombonist Bob McChesney, pianist Matt Harris, bassist Trey Henry and drummer Dick Weller elucidate and to a large extent, reinvent ten Allen compositions as the overall results are often astounding and beguiling! Allen, the Renaissance man has amassed a rather large body of work that represents a relatively expansive scope, whether it be Dixieland, Swing, Blues, Theatrical or glib and humorous pieces that serve as vehicles for his witty recitations and prose. With this new release, the Bob McChesney Quartet take Allen under their collective wing so to speak and perform with vigor, passion and fire as if Allen had written these pieces with this band in mind. From the onset it is most apparent that McChesney and co. rise above and beyond the call of duty as they pay dutiful homage to Allen's well-known affinities for, sentiment, congenial innocence and memorable melodies.

Bob McChesney exhibits his amazing technical prowess by performing rapid Bop-ish notes in quadruple time atop the bang-up and swiftly swinging rhythmic support on the opener, "Meet Me Where They Play The Blues". On this piece, the band launch the proceedings in forward motion with a few bars of dream-laden Blues lines, while subsequently pulling out the stops with some hard-driving and fierce grooves that will most assuredly grab the listener's attention. These are consummate professionals with a mission in mind as they generate lush lyricism on Allen's sentimental yet alluring composition, "Time". "Road Rage" is pure post-Bop led by McChesney's commanding presence and authoritative articulation of the strong melody line amid stinging rhythms and shifting crosscurrents. Again, McChesney's impossibly fast; disciplined, clear-toned and concise delivery is utterly mind-boggling while seldom if ever, missing a note! Yet, this is not all about chops as McChesney and his counterparts perform with emotion and great depth. The band turn Allen's "Steve's Blues" into a vivacious blues/swing romp as the rhythm section kick matters into overdrive with sterling interplay, sharpshooter-style precision and hearty soloing.

No Laughing Matter -The Bob McChesney Quartet Plays Steve Allen is clearly top-shelf stuff as the venerable Steve Allen must be proud of these lads! Besides the truly motivated and passionate performances from the ensemble, McChesney's quick-witted maneuvers and soul-searching delivery is flat out, mesmerizing! Without a doubt, Bob McChesney is one of the finest trombonists this writer has ever heard as No Laughing Matter is to be taken quite seriously! Highly recommended. \* \* \* \* \*

Personnel: Bob McChesney; Trombone: Matt Harris; Piano: Trey Henry; Bass: Dick Weller; Drums.

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**Tom Smith - International Trombone Association Journal - Vol 29, Number1, Winter 2001**

NO LAUGHING MATTER: THE BOB

McCHESNEY QUARTET PLAYS STEVE ALLEN

BOB McCHESNEY QUARTET. Bob McChesney, trombone; Matt Harris, piano; Trey Henry, bass; Dick Weller, drums.

Steve Allen: Meet Me Where They Play The Blues; Time; Road Rage; Pretty People; Chittlins; Steve's Blues: Cutie Face; Sultry Samba; This Is Where We Came In; Playing The Field.

These days, there is a ground swell of Bob McChesney talk from within the jazz trombone community. Most of the enthusiasm is being generated by the same young trombonists who embraced J.J. Johnson in the '40s, Carl Fontana in the '60s, and Bill Watrous in the '70s. These rapidly evolving students yearn to be dexterous jazz technicians, without being labeled unsubstantial by myopic critics who fail to understand that agile trombone improvisation is in of itself an innovation. They are the latest generation to pay homage to the magically elusive "doodle tongue"; and right now Bob McChesney is one of their handpicked favorites.

From the stand point of sheer technical prowess, NO LAUGHING MATTER is in a class by itself. McChesney is perfecting doodle tonguing in ways that are almost incalculable. Of principal significance is his ability to incorporate robust body and substance into his overall sound, while still maintaining remarkable speed and clarity. Throughout this recording, McChesney addresses the dynamics issue raised by opponents of doodle tongue technique. Dynamic limitation has always been the overused criticism leveled at trombonists who embrace this style of playing - with "they have to use a microphone", being the most frequent disclaimer. I doubt that anyone could fairly assess McChesney in this matter. Judging solely by his performance on this recording, one would assume that he is capable of performing at any volume that suits him.

McChesney has surrounded himself with a fabulous rhythm section, performing surprisingly neglected compositions by Steve Allen, one of the most underrated creators of American song. The fact that Allen was personally involved in this project only adds to McChesney's growing stock as a major player in the music business.

After several years of prominent studio work and apprenticeship in world-class organizations like the Bob Florence Big Band, Bob McChesney has arrived. There are times when hearing him is like hearing the trombone played for the first time. No serious jazz trombone collection can be complete without the possession of this recording.

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