

## **Janet Klein and her Parlor Boys are “Ready For You”**

by Skoot Larson

If vaudeville were still the most popular form of entertainment, Janet Klein and her Parlor Boys would be a household name across America. Janet has a light, sparkling voice, a great, sometimes-a-little-naughty, sense of humor, and an unbelievably broad knowledge of songs, both from the jazz age of the 20s and 30s, and more recent musical tales that can be fit to that fun and happy traditional style.

Janet’s “Parlor Boys” surround her with that wild and bubbly “Jazz Age” feeling, taking their audience to the band’s own magic land of swing. The music may be nostalgic, but the solid jazz this group builds their fun around is tight and together improvised music.

Janet is, of course, the center of attention. The lady can do a deadpan delivery to pack a lyric with subtle humor, or she can convey the message straight out with feeling, but always Janet Klein is having fun and enjoying the songs she sings. Janet accompanies her voice with shy, girlish dance steps, often tugging at her dress to slightly and slyly raise her hem an inch or two. And, her face is always mugging to a non-existent camera, looking right into the audience or turning a profile for a flapper-*ish* glance over her shoulder.

Occasionally joining Janet in the front line is ragtime raconteur and sixties pop idol Ian Whitcomb. In the Parlor Boys line-up, Ian plays ukulele, banjolele, and accordion. A brilliant composer and vocalist on his own, Ian’s duets with Janet are a special joy. Ian’s English accent adds class to the act, as does his ribald sense-of-humor.

One of the ear-catching tunes on “Ready For You” is the Ian & Janet duo “Have A Martini.” Liner notes on the CD credit this tune to Oliver de Cologne in 1933. Ian, however, takes credit for the song’s creation when he performs it away from the Parlor Boys. Whoever penned it, it’s a delightful ditty with a relevant message for these tough times. Over the music of the chorus, we hear Janet voicing her preference for gin, while Ian states that he’d rather have vodka in his Martinis.

The background here is classic – a tuba bass line, accordion supplying the chords, and a soft and soppy 20s tenor sax riffing the chorus. More “jazz age” than jazz, it entertains well with its timeless and positive message.

The title cut, Cole Porter’s “I’m Getting’ Myself Ready for You,” is a swinging opener. This track features solo work by cornetist Corey Gemme, Brad Kay on trumpet, Tom Marion’s banjo, and the violin of Dan Weinstein. Janet has a good time ragging and bending the notes while lending credibility to the verses before the saxophone section takes the tune out.

It should be mention here that the arrangements are exemplary throughout this disc. The simple statement of credit is, “Janet and the boys,” but someone in this group has set a hep, individual harmonic footprint across the album’s selections. The charts give Janet and company a clear and vibrant ‘signature’ sound.

The Parlor Boys get some memorable Western Swing going with their instrumental “Roll On, Mississippi, Roll On.” This fast shuffle makes the most of the groups colorful and authentic 30s banjo and fiddle provided by Marion and Weinstein.

Janet’s acting ability shines on “I Don’t Know Whether To Do It Or Not.” A young Jersey girl’s lament about her impending wedding, this cut will make the sourest puss smile, as Janet captures the accent and citified feelings of the tune’s locale.

Traditional blues lament “Sweet Papa, Momma’s Getting Mad,” is a showcase for Janet and violinist Benny Brydern in an unaccompanied duo.

Personal favorites include “That’s What You Think,” and “I Ain’t That Kind of a Baby.” Both these numbers show Janet as the smart and thoroughly modern ‘roaring twenties’ gal who has discovered she doesn’t need some man to give her rules or instructions for living.

“Ready For You,” is a recording you should add to your collection for the pure joy and laughter it will give you. Janet may not be an Annie Ross or a Dinah Washington, but I would bet that you’ll find yourself listening to Janet and her Parlor Boys over and over. Whenever life drags on you, Janet Klein can bring your mood around to bubble and joy just as Louis Jordan or Slim Gaillard might have done for you in the past!

“Ready For You,” and other ‘happy’ music discs from Janet Klein and her Parlor Boys can be purchased from [www.cdbaby.com](http://www.cdbaby.com), [www.jazzbymail.com](http://www.jazzbymail.com), or from Janet and the

boys' website, [www.janetklein.com](http://www.janetklein.com). There is also an extensive collection of videos of Janet and company, including duets with Ian Whitcomb, on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com). The challenge is to keep your feet still when you listen to these fine musicians, 'cause the way they play, you'll feel like dancing, or at least patting your feet to their beat.