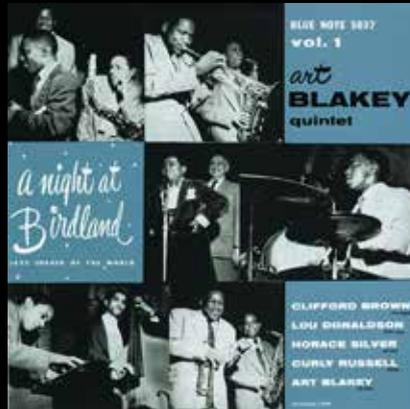


JazzTimes

AMERICA'S JAZZ MAGAZINE



ARTIST'S CHOICE



TODAY'S TOP MUSICIANS PICK CLASSIC TRACKS BY



Blakey
Ornette
Coltrane
Miles
Ella
Mingus
Jaco
+ more



ORNETTE COLEMAN

BY BEN ALLISON

THE THIRD JAZZ RECORD I EVER BOUGHT WAS Ornette Coleman's *This Is Our Music*. I had never heard anything like it before and it changed the way I thought about music. I was in high school and was just beginning to immerse myself in the world of jazz. Until that point, most of the jazz I had heard was bebop-era music, which to my teenaged, rock-loving ears sounded a bit cerebral and complex: No vocals to pull me in immediately. With Ornette (I use his first name throughout this article with all due respect), I heard something new but also somehow familiar. This was folk music, raw and edgy. It made sense to me immediately. There was blues in there, for sure. And a voice. It was a saxophone voice. I was hooked. Here are some favorites, in no particular order.

"Folk Tale"

THIS IS OUR MUSIC (Atlantic, 1961)

This record featured the great but rarely recorded lineup of trumpeter Don Cherry, drummer Ed Blackwell and bassist Charlie Haden. One of the world's funkier drummers, Blackwell was not afraid to play the *drums*, not just the cymbals. On this record he hooks up with Haden in such a deep way that it makes me wonder why Ornette rarely used them together on record. To my ears, "Folk Tale" is an archetypal Ornette tune—full of catchy melodies and grooves, hairpin turns and a kind of offbeat humor that pops up in a lot of his music.

"Human Being"

SOAPSUDS, SOAPSUDS (Artists House, 1977)

Soapsuds, Soapsuds features Ornette and Charlie Haden in the stripped-down setting of a duo. Recorded for the great Artists House label, the sonic room afforded by a duo gives these masters room to harmonize and re-harmonize at will. "Human Being" is remarkable for its stark beauty, soulful lyricism and the amazing counterpoint offered by Haden, some of his best playing on record.

"Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman"

SOAPSUDS, SOAPSUDS (Artists House, 1977)

I couldn't decide between "Human Being" and this one so I chose them both. "Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman" is the theme from the amazing and strange nighttime soap-opera parody of the same name. Norman Lear created the kind of television that pushed boundaries, much in the way that Ornette does with music. Humor, deep emotion and a just-plain-weird feeling pervaded the show. I wouldn't be surprised if this kind of improvised "reality" was a big influence on filmmaker Christopher Guest.



"What Reason Could I Give?"

SCIENCE FICTION (Columbia, 1971)

One of the rare Ornette tunes to feature vocals, this take sounds colossal with Ed Blackwell and Billy Higgins on drums, plus four tightly voiced horn players (including Ornette and Dewey Redman and two trumpeters) and a processed mix that adds to the density and intensity. Vocalist Asha Puthli really belts it out with fearless energy, a perfect beginning to a record that has a serious edge to it. Any record that has the word "science" in it has my attention.

"Invisible"

SOMETHING ELSE!!!! (Contemporary, 1958)

On *Something Else!!!!*, Ornette's first album, you can hear a lot of classic bebop references. It sounds a bit like a first step, the beginning of a transition. In hindsight we know where Ornette's going with his music. But at this point in history the other musicians are very firmly routed in American Songbook forms, which, in a way, is at odds with Ornette's more folk-and-blues-oriented music. To my ears, Ornette is referencing a more traditional—maybe even primal—approach to music that the modern musicians of the day weren't hip to yet (or had forgotten).

"The Alchemy of Scott LaFaro"

THE ART OF THE IMPROVISERS (Atlantic, 1961)

For me, the session that produced this cut as well as the album *Ornette!* and part of *Twins* is all about Scott LaFaro (bass) and Ed Blackwell. LaFaro brought a totally different energy to Ornette's music when he temporarily replaced Charlie Haden. This is truly "out" music, which means it's atonal. The focus is timbre and energy. The forms are very simple, rough and loose, and sometimes difficult to discern. This is not lyrical music, not folk music as I think of it. There's a great conversation happening—it's just not about the weather or sports.

"Feet Music"

IN ALL LANGUAGES (Caravan of Dreams, 1987)

"Feet Music" is one of my favorite Ornette tunes. It's a funky boogaloo with lots of blues elements. One of the things that I've always loved about Ornette's music is the way he can break a groove for a few bars at a time, then resume it and make it sound alright. That kind of thing is more common in folk and blues music but almost never happens in bebop-era tunes. It's another example of how his music is so tied to the cadences of the human voice, both in song and in spoken language. This has been a huge influence on my music.

"Tears Inside"

TOMORROW IS THE QUESTION (Atlantic, 1959)

Another great blues, filled with interesting momentary trips into unrelated keys and a hint of bop phrasing. "Tears Inside" is always fun to play.

"Rejoicing"

TOMORROW IS THE QUESTION (Atlantic, 1959)

Parts of this tune remind me of Charlie Parker's "Relaxin' at Camarillo." It's rooted in bop phrasing and harmonic structure but

with a few odd measures and other twists and turns that knock it off-center. What makes this so quintessentially Ornette is the way he solos. It's a slippery statement that, once again, sounds like a vocalization to my ears.

"Blues Connotation"

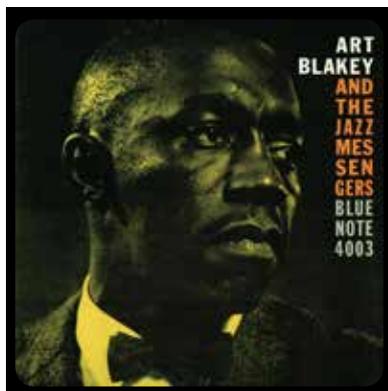
THIS IS OUR MUSIC (Atlantic, 1961)

"Blues Connotation" is one of his most enduring and covered tunes and the first one I ever learned to play. Ornette's saxophone playing and his approach to composition are completely intertwined. It's not easy to play his tunes without hearing his voice on the saxophone in your mind. Like Bird, his pre-conceived melodies seem to be extensions of his improvisation—part of one sound, integrated and whole. He's a complete artist and one of my biggest inspirations. **JT**

ART BLAKEY

BY JAVON JACKSON

ART BLAKEY PROVIDED ME with countless opportunities and lessons as a Jazz Messenger. He was always willing to support me as a musician and a human being. In doing so, he gave me his thoughts and answers to my questions pure, with no sugarcoating. I owe him a great deal and truly appreciate every moment spent with my man "Bu," truly one of the most dynamic musicians we have known.



"Hammer Head"

Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers *FREE FOR ALL* (Blue Note, 1965)

One of my favorite Jazz Messengers tracks, with so much energy and passion. You can even hear Art's voice throughout the track enjoying the music.

"Split Kick"

Art Blakey Quintet *A NIGHT AT BIRDLAND, VOL. 1* (Blue Note, 1954)

I heard this track hundreds of times in my home as a child. Art's ensemble playing is amazing. He is a wizard!

"Nica's Dream"

THE JAZZ MESSENGERS (Columbia, 1956)

I don't have a statement for this track. If you have heard it, you understand: It's beautiful to the point of being hypnotic.

"Just Knock on My Door"

Art Blakey Quartet *A JAZZ MESSAGE* (Impulse!, 1964)

A unique quartet that includes Art, Sonny Stitt, McCoy Tyner and Art Davis. Masterful!

"One for Daddy-O"

Cannonball Adderley *SOMETHIN' ELSE* (Blue Note, 1958)

Wow, this one is something else. The blues!

"Pristine"

John Coltrane *THE BETHLEHEM YEARS* (Bethlehem, 1957)

It's great to hear Coltrane and Art together. Art loved him and loved to speak about him.

"Well, You Needn't"

Thelonious Monk *MONK'S MUSIC* (Blue Note, 1957)

Art Blakey and his interpretation of Thelonious Monk's compositions was and is a pleasure for me to witness, whether on the bandstand with him or through recordings like this one.

"Misterioso"

Sonny Rollins *VOL. 2* (Blue Note, 1957)

Art Blakey with Sonny, J.J. Johnson, Monk, Horace Silver and Paul Chambers, all on one track. Six stylists together!

"Moanin'"

Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers *MOANIN'* (Blue Note, 1959)

The hit! This or "Blues March": We had to play one of the two at every performance.

"Ornithology"

Charlie Parker *ONE NIGHT IN BIRDLAND* (Columbia, 1950)

This is another one for which there are no words. Charlie Parker, Fats Navarro, Bud Powell, Curly Russell and Art Blakey. The recording quality isn't great, but it's still one that you must hear!



RAY BROWN

BY JOHN CLAYTON

RAY BROWN IS THE REASON I PLAY BASS.

The instrument chose me and I chose Ray Brown. At age 16, I didn't know much about how awesome he was, but the more I studied him and studied with him, the more I learned what the jazz world already knew: He was a pivotal force in jazz from his bebop days until his death.

"Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me"

Duke Ellington and Ray Brown
THIS ONE'S FOR BLANTON (Pablo, 1972)

Ray decided to play the bass after hearing this song played by Jimmy Blanton with Duke. I remember him telling me, "It wasn't his solos that first got my attention—it was that sound, that groove and those basslines!" This, Duke's last recording, was a session Ray was proud of.

"Two Bass Hit"

Dizzy Gillespie and His Orchestra
(RCA Victor, 1947)

It's interesting to hear the Blanton influence rise to the top. There are a couple of places where he plays Blanton solo lines, almost verbatim. Check out the youthful enthusiasm he and the guys had!

"Killer Joe"

Quincy Jones
WALKING IN SPACE (A&M, 1969)

This is a classic. Quincy was responsible for seeing to it that Ray finally got to play with Grady Tate. That had never happened before this date. I heard this on the radio a while back and had to stop the car. I pulled over and called Christian McBride—together we screamed positive obscenities in trying to express how insane this cut is.

"My Funny Valentine"

Michel Legrand
AT SHELLY'S MANNE-HOLE (Verve, 1968)

This is obscure and it shouldn't be. As a kid, I bought this album for this one track. This is some of the best bass and vocal you will ever hear. Period.

"My Shining Hour"

Sammy Davis Jr. With Count Basie
OUR SHINING HOUR (Verve, 1965)

Very few people know that this is Ray Brown. His name is not listed and he was never a member of Basie's band. If you know Ray's sound and his lines, you won't be fooled for a nanosecond. It's interesting to hear him in *this* band—a perfect fit.



"Tenderly"

Milt Jackson
THAT'S THE WAY IT IS (Impulse!, 1970)

Here is the stellar example of how to construct an unaccompanied bass solo. The band plays in the middle, but the solo returns to end the song.

"Gumbo Hump"

Ray Brown Trio
3 DIMENSIONAL (Concord, 1992)

This trio was *amazing!* If you couldn't feel the soul and grease that poured off the bandstand, you were probably dead. Ray was extremely proud of this and his subsequent trios, and for good reason.

"Tangerine"

Ray Brown
JAZZ CELLO (Verve, 1960)

Cello! Not new to jazz, but Ray was one of the pioneers (after Oscar Pettiford) of this sound and concept. His solo ideas are as clean as a whistle. As always, it's clear that he's having big fun.

"A Sleepin' Bee"

Jimmy Rowles and Ray Brown
TASTY! (Concord, 1980)

Ray loved playing with Jimmy Rowles. It had to do with Jimmy's swing, quirkiness, keyboard touch and soul. Check out Ray's sound: It's one of the clearer, cleaner recordings you'll find of him: just a microphone in front of the instrument.

"It Ain't Necessarily So"

Ray Brown/Christian McBride/John Clayton
SUPERBASS 2 (Concord, 2001)

OK, I stuck this in for reasons of nostalgia. I can never forget the rehearsal we had with this group—everyone had to bring in a few things. When we read through this arrangement of Ray's, from the first four bars you could tell that it was special. Ray put so much into every rehearsal and performance that it became impossible to not become wrapped in his joy and be drawn into the feelings he emitted. **JT**



JOHN COLTRANE

BY DAVID LIEBMAN

IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT TRANE WAS, for my generation and even beyond that, one of the most admired musicians of all time. He had it all: perfect musicianship, relationships with the greatest players, a musical vision of his own and, of course, the clear spiritual essence of his music, which he so clearly enunciated on the recording *A Love Supreme*. Picking several tracks is tough because he was so prolific, but I will use as my standard the musical effect these tracks represented.

"Giant Steps"

GIANT STEPS (Atlantic, 1960)

As the standard bearer of the ultimate chord-progression tune, this little musical puzzle quickly became required for all jazz musicians post-1959.

"Countdown"

GIANT STEPS (Atlantic, 1960)

The tempo on this re-working of Miles Davis' "Tune-up" uses the above-mentioned "Giant Steps" chord pattern, but at a speed that is beyond the scope of most mere mortals.

"Naima"

GIANT STEPS (Atlantic, 1960)

Because of its pedal-point bassline with moving chords superimposed above, "Naima" was in a sense a harbinger of where music was about to move for the next 50 years.

"Chasin' the Trane"

LIVE AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD (Impulse!, 1961)

The ultimate blues performance, long and fiery without a chord instrument, recorded live at the venerable Village Vanguard in New York. Seemingly influenced to some degree by Ornette Coleman, who by the time of this recording had already made an impact on forward-looking jazz musicians, this performance puts the tenor saxophone front and center, technically speaking. Trane invents a variety of new ways of looking at sound using the altissimo register, with multiphonics and harmonics abounding ... quite sophisticated. This performance became an encyclopedia of what was possible but never explored on that instrument.

"Nancy With the Laughing Face"

BALLADS (Impulse!, 1962)

I could have chosen any ballad, but I always loved this one from the *Ballads* recording for its lightness and clarity of purpose. *Ballads* was quite a shock to the audience when it was released. No one expected Trane to lower the heat to such a degree in the mid-'60s, when his music was so known for energy and intensity.



But Trane could play a ballad like no one else, using his beautiful and lyrical tone to full advantage.

"Impressions"

IMPRESSIONS (Impulse!, 1963)

There are probably a dozen or so versions of this standard progression evolved from Miles Davis' "So What" harmonic scheme. This tune was the flag-waver for the classic quartet, sometimes in live performance lasting over an hour, with the duo of Trane and drummer Elvin Jones doing most of the playing. The way Trane played this tune on a nightly basis was jazz at its highest peak: fiery and inventive with cliff-hanging tension and release and, most important, true commitment.

"Crescent"

CRESCENT (Impulse!, 1964)

My all-time favorite track of Trane's because of its absolute perfection and economical sense of proportion and line. Using simple harmonies (nothing like "Giant Steps"), Trane plays a solo as if it were written out beforehand. (That's always a meta goal of improvisers, meaning that the blowing stands up to the rigors of what a good composition should be. It's called "compositional review.") There are no fireworks on this track, but the lightness of being that the rhythm section gets is beyond words. Trane rides over Elvin Jones, McCoy Tyner and Jimmy Garrison like a bird in flight.

"Pursuance"

A LOVE SUPREME (Impulse!, 1965)

This is the ultimate pentatonic exercise over a blues form at a fast tempo, with the pots fully boiling. In a certain sense, this is a summary of what the classic quartet achieved in the harmonic and rhythmic realm during its period together in the early/mid-1960s.

"One Up, One Down"

LIVE AT THE HALF NOTE (Impulse!, 1965)

Recorded live at the Half Note club in Manhattan, Trane takes two basic scale sounds (whole tone and augmented) and wrings everything out of them, again for a good part of the performance in duet with Elvin Jones. From a historical standpoint, this is Trane's swan song in regards to his playing the common language of jazz at the time. Free music, what we refer to as "late Trane," was about to happen. **JT**



MILES(& MORE)

BY MIKE STERN

TO ME, ALMOST EVERYTHING MILES PLAYED WAS beautiful, mainly because he played with so much soul. It's really hard to pick just a few tracks from someone whose music you dig so much. Also, what do you say about music? My usual philosophy is, just listen to it, it speaks for itself. Anyway, my selections were pretty random. The only thing that guided me in my choices was to make selections from a couple of different periods of Miles' career, to show how open he was to all kinds of music. I also picked a track of mine featuring another incredible trumpet player, Randy Brecker.

Miles was a pretty complicated person, but he had a great sense of humor. One time, he flew me out of New York to record with him in L.A., and I stayed at his house in Malibu. He cooked dinner—chicken with lots of hot sauce—and after we ate, I put the dishes in the dishwasher and started the machine. About two minutes later, there were soap bubbles leaking everywhere and the whole kitchen was getting soaked. I turned the machine off, but it was still leaking. So I yelled, “Miles, we gotta do something! Do you know how to fix this dishwasher?” Miles looked at the mess, then looked at me kind of puzzled and said, “Mike, ask me about a chord or a scale or somethin.” Then we got into his car and went to the studio to record. I think the dishwasher was still leaking all over the kitchen floor.

“Oleo”

IN PERSON FRIDAY AND SATURDAY NIGHTS AT THE BLACKHAWK, COMPLETE (Legacy; rec. 1961, rel. 2003)

This is a fast tempo and Miles tears it up! So does everyone else on the record. Fifteen trillion stars! (If stars were dollars, we could pay off the U.S. budget deficit with this record.)

“Stella by Starlight”

THE COMPLETE LIVE AT THE PLUGGED NICKEL 1965 (Legacy, 1995)

Another amazing live recording from Miles. Obviously a more modern conception than anything in the *Blackhawk* set. No matter how loose and modern Miles sounded, no matter how far out the music got, he was always able to bring it back home. He could play pretty out but also stay on the ground at the same time. He never seemed to get too far away from the blues.

“Sanctuary”

BITCHES BREW (Columbia, 1970)

There is such a gorgeous spacey feel on this tune. Miles plays so lyrically at first, then the performance builds to a climax, and then it comes back to lyricism. Lots of drama. Miles was a great storyteller.



“Blue in Green”

KIND OF BLUE (Columbia, 1959)

Miles plays beautifully here—such a beautiful tone with the Harmon mute. I never thought Miles was as tough as he seemed. I always suspected that his mysterious, sometimes angry, aloof image was masking a deep sadness and insecurity that was very much a part of him. During the years I played with him and got to know him a little bit, I realized how true this was. Miles could be hypersensitive, sometimes easily hurt, but he always tried to run from that side of himself. This is not to say that he didn't have other sides to his personality: courage, passion, warmth, joy and humor. Anyway, we can hear all of the above when he played his horn, especially when he played a ballad.

“Back Seat Betty,” “Fast Track”

WE WANT MILES (Columbia, 1982)

These are loose funk vamps. No matter what kind of groove Miles played over, he always sounded like himself. Some of the phrasing and the feel of his playing on this record could be superimposed over a more straight-ahead jazz groove. Even when he was playing over funk, Miles was always swinging.

“Out of the Blue”

Mike Stern Featuring Randy Brecker
ALL OVER THE PLACE (Heads Up, 2012)

Randy Brecker is one of my favorite musicians and is a featured artist on this record. He has a wonderful, very individual style of playing and writing. There is lots of bebop vocabulary and plenty of humor in his music, which I really like. I am very proud to have played with him over the years, and I continue to enjoy that experience to this day. Even though Randy is a very well-known and much-respected jazz musician, has won a bunch of polls, received many Grammys, etc., I still think he's underrated. **JT**

Mike Stern is a guitarist and composer who performed and recorded with Miles Davis from 1981-83 and again during 1985-86. His latest album is entitled Trip (Heads Up).



ELLA FITZGERALD

BY ANN HAMPTON
CALLAWAY

I WANT TO LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE EVERYONE KNOWS who Ella Fitzgerald is. As Jefferson is to the Constitution, as Da Vinci is to the Renaissance, Ella Fitzgerald is to American jazz. I say is because I don't believe there's any was to the great ones, and there certainly is no was to Ella. Ella crosses bridges of race, creed and color around the world by being in the moment in everything she does. In her singular way of singing, as each note leaps out of her without a net, she catches millions of hearts along the way, including mine every single time. Here's my hero in nine favorite songs. Come on in.

"Stompin' at the Savoy"

ELLA IN ROME (Verve, 1958)

There's swing and there's *swang*. When you have Oscar Peterson at the piano, Ray Brown on bass, Herb Ellis on guitar and Gus Johnson on drums on the encore of your 41st birthday before an ecstatic audience in Rome, you are going to swang. Check out the moment when she improvises instructions to Oscar to take a solo after he made her giggle earlier.

"I Loves You, Porgy"

ELLA IN ROME (Verve, 1958)

One of her finest ballad readings. Pianist Lou Levy anticipates each thought and breath so she is free to completely inhabit the world of this classic from the opera *Porgy and Bess*. The purity of her a cappella opening line, "I want to stay here," feels like a disrobing, and she sings about her love throughout the rest of the song in the emotional nude.

"They Can't Take That Away From Me"

ELLA AND LOUIS (Verve, 1956)

To hear the affectionate friendship between these two jazz greats, mirrored in the musical friendship they share here, is the ultimate musical comfort food to me. Somehow their voices—Ella's smooth with Satchmo's raspy—go together like mac and cheese. Ella and Louis traded choruses and lines with ease, intimacy and swinging good humor.

"Something to Live For"

ELLA AT DUKE'S PLACE (Verve, 1965)

Billy Strayhorn is rumored to have begun writing this song at the age of 18, and the lyrics expressing yearning and loss in the midst of fame and fortune seem to hold much resonance for Ella in this performance. Duke was a longtime friend of Ella's, and it's easy to hear how his sensibilities as a composer, arranger, conductor and accompanist fit hand in glove with what I call Ella's "ella-gance" and "ella-quence."



"How High the Moon"

MACK THE KNIFE: ELLA IN BERLIN (Verve, 1960)

This is from the first Ella album I heard as a child, and whenever it played on our turntable, our tiny walkup in Chicago became a musical paradise. Many of my favorite Ella moments are on her live recordings, as she seems to sing with the greatest abandon before her beloved audiences.

"I Hadn't Anyone Till You"

ELLA FITZGERALD SINGS SONGS FROM "LET NO MAN WRITE MY EPITAPH" (Verve, 1960)

With just the spare accompaniment of Paul Smith at the piano, there is a particularly haunting side to Ella here that tugs at my heart. It sounds like one of those moments that happens at about 4 a.m., after a long night when the club has finally emptied, the chairs are put up and the pianist asks the singer, "How about one more?" Without a trace of artifice, Ella sings this confession as if her very own, and I believe every word.

"Oh, Lady Be Good"

ELLA SINGS GERSHWIN (Decca, 1950)

In the 1940s, this song helped establish Ella as one of the greatest jazz singers in the world. Here is a spectacular example of Ella jamming with the Bob Haggart Band in L.A., with no holds barred. Ella shows she is not just a singer, she is a musician armed with more ideas per minute than a Mensa scholar.

"Night and Day"

ELLA FITZGERALD SINGS THE COLE PORTER SONGBOOK (Verve, 1956)

As a keeper of the flame of the Great American Songbook, I have the utmost admiration for the brilliance of Norman Granz's eight-album Ella *Songbook* series on Verve. This song is from the first collection that Ella recorded, and it is arranged and conducted by Buddy Bregman. We find Ella at the peak of her vocal powers here, enlivening Porter's masterful lyrics.

"Joe Williams' Blues"

TWELVE NIGHTS IN HOLLYWOOD (Verve, 2009)

From the must-have four-CD box set featuring Ella live in L.A. with Oscar Peterson at the piano, she rules the world with a song she composed herself based on Joe Williams' many blues hits. Ella pioneered what I like to call a "scat-ley," a medley of scatted song quotes, and this track displays her genius—so relaxed and joyous, you can almost feel the wind in your hair. **JT**



JIM HALL

BY NELS CLINE

WHEN I WAS ASKED TO SELECT 10 TRACKS BY A favorite jazz artist, it was pretty easy to pick the great guitarist and improviser *nonpareil* Jim Hall. What I wasn't ready for was just how difficult selecting those 10 tracks would be! I surrounded myself with some 30 favorite recordings, mostly with Hall as the leader. Perhaps some readers familiar with my generally very non-Jim Hall guitar playing are wondering why I chose him. Perhaps you are thinking that opposites attract. The reason is because Hall has, since the 1950s, been a paragon of taste, tone, creativity and inventiveness. These qualities have kept Hall's music pushing forward: never stale, often surprising.

"Secret Love"

LIVE IN TOKYO (A&M/Horizon Japan, 1977)

My first experience with Jim Hall's music was listening to recordings by this wonderful trio from the mid-'70s with Canadian wizards Don Thompson (bass) and Terry Clarke (drums). This version of "Secret Love" shows the absolutely beautiful way Hall interprets sweet song material such as this. Few players, if anyone, can match what Hall does over a major-seventh chord. There is so much understatement with so much nuance and restraint, but without the playing ever sounding anything less than probingly lyrical and memorable.

"My Funny Valentine"

Bill Evans/Jim Hall

UNDERCURRENT (Blue Note, 1963)

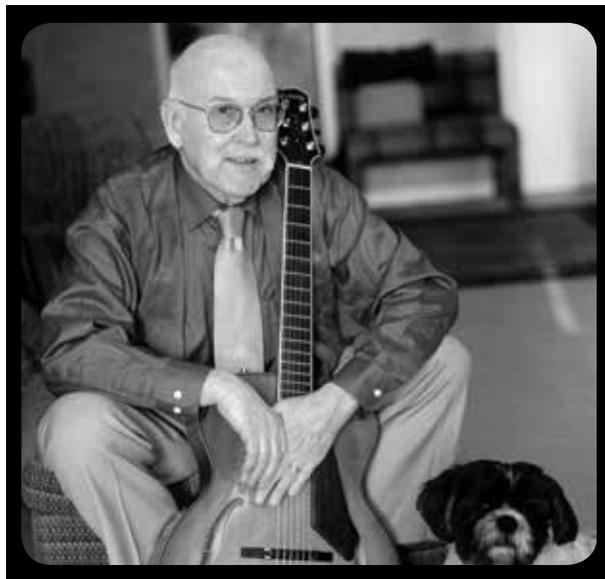
This gorgeous meeting of two melodic and harmonic giants never ceases to be rewarding. "My Funny Valentine" can be one of those tunes that sets dyed-in-the-wool jazz cats to groaning. But this version is blithely swinging—almost jaunty—with rhythmic invention and drive that one does not associate with this generally torchy song. The comping alone is exhilarating to listen to: Evans drops dozens of tiny chord stabs; the two dart around the groove and each other with unerring and relaxed swing. Hall's solo is a treasure trove of classic jazz improvisation at its best—on any instrument.

"Without a Song"

Sonny Rollins

THE BRIDGE (RCA Victor, 1962)

This session features some of the most hair-raisingly adroit up-tempo swing recorded after the boppers cranked up the metronome a decade earlier. I have selected the leadoff track, "Without a Song," because, beyond the amazing solos, burning tempo and delightful exchanges in evidence here, Hall's comping astonishes; his accompaniment, along with the soaring rhythm section, drives the track to spectacular heights. Make no mistake about it: This guy can drive a band strumming a guitar like some sort of demonic 1930s big-band guitarist on Gypsy/samba pills.



"Kyoto Bells"

JAZZ IMPRESSIONS OF JAPAN (A&M Japan, 1977)

Another Japanese LP, again with the classic '70s trio of Thompson and Clarke, this record consists of original compositions/improvisations only—no standards. The results are marvelous. "Kyoto Bells" starts with Hall's harmonics and then blazes a trail that is absolutely smokin'. But I also include it to point out that Hall has often used the idiomatic elements of the guitar as part of his sonic palette, and the results are consistently stimulating and profound.

"Prelude to a Kiss"

Jim Hall/Ron Carter

ALONE TOGETHER (Milestone, 1973)

Alongside bassist Ron Carter back in '73, Hall plays so quietly on this live recording that it's a wonder you can't hear every tangential conversation in the room! This gorgeous version of the Ellington classic showcases so many of Hall's remarkable musical traits: the amazing, lush chording; the at times polyrhythmic melodic sequencing that extends over the bar lines as he seeks that perfect resolution (which doesn't always come—Hall's courage and risk-taking are part of his genius); and his ability to blend straight and swing feels in an almost eccentric way.

"Round Midnight"

JIM HALL LIVE! (A&M/Horizon, 1976)

Again with the '70s trio of Thompson and Clarke, here is another virtuoso display of visionary artistry: the melodic/polyrhythmic sequencing, puckish song quotes and maddeningly wonderful chords and chord soloing. And here I must mention one of my pet terms for Jim Hall: King of the Bridges. I don't know what it is, but the bridges to classic standards seem to set him off. One can almost invariably be inundated with a staggering outpouring of classic Hall invention come *The Bridge*. **JT**

“Waltz New”

Jim Hall/Red Mitchell

JIM HALL AND RED MITCHELL (Artists House, 1978)

Another live recording, it is included here mainly for two reasons: One is to mention another crafty original Hall composition; the other is Red Mitchell, to my mind one of the greatest jazz bassists. The matchup of Hall and Mitchell was stellar. This beautifully recorded album has among its treasures this Hall original called “Waltz New,” which opens with a breathtakingly effortless assaying in octaves of the tune’s serpentine melody, and cool changes reminiscent of “Someday My Prince Will Come.”

“Careful”

JAZZ IMPRESSIONS OF JAPAN (A&M Japan, 1977)

Another track from this scarce record, selected as an example of Hall’s recognizable and sophisticated composing. This slinky line, a twisty and ultra-hip blues, may have been the unconscious inspiration for my own piece dedicated to Jim Hall, “Blues, Too.” Listen as Hall changes the timbre of his guitar by playing certain passages at the bridge for a more nasal tone. Hall takes things pretty far out there on this track. Ultra-dense

and modern chords, many of them arrived at by the cogent use of open strings, clang and skitter around.

“These Rooms”

JIM HALL TRIO FEATURING TOM HARRELL

(Denon, 1988)

Every track on this record is great, and many of them, like the title track, are forward-looking, far-reaching and wholly satisfying on many levels. The piece “These Rooms,” another Hall original, is a sort of chamber-jazz suite wherein the quartet is broken down into various smaller units, solo cadenzas occur, and the whole thing ends up in a funky New Orleans groove that I dare you to avoid tapping your foot to.

“Passacaglia”

TEXTURES (Telarc, 1997)

To showcase Hall as composer/orchestrator/large-ensemble leader, I submit to you “Passacaglia,” from an album of Hall compositions for guitar with (variously) brass ensemble, string orchestra and string trio and featuring guest soloists like Joe Lovano and Claudio Roditi. This piece is so beautiful, so brilliant and so inventive: dynamic and probing and moving and unlike any jazz-related composing you may have heard! The piece is a sort of concerto for string orchestra and acoustic archtop guitar. It’s haunting, and listening to it often gives me chills. **JT**

KEITH JARRETT BY KENNY WERNER

KEITH JARRETT IS GENERALLY RECOGNIZED AS ONE of the greatest pianists and improvisers of his time. He represents the apex of human possibilities for an artist, where intellect, virtuosity and spirit combine to constitute genius.

For many years Jarrett focused on his trio with drummer Jack DeJohnette and bassist Gary Peacock. Lost, perhaps, was his prolific composing, which went hand in hand with the beauty of his playing. Many of my picks deal with Jarrett’s early period because they have much to do with his compositions. Likewise, although his most famous solo recording, *The Köln Concert*, and all subsequent solo recordings, are much better known to the public, for me his first solo recording, *Facing You*, reigns supreme. Its innovative approach to composition and musical development was shocking at the time. Jarrett radiated as much warmth, heart and beauty in his playing as he did virtuosity and intellect. Jarrett’s playing represents new and innovative levels of harmonic, rhythmic and melodic development bundled with the vastest creativity imaginable. It was a new standard of playing in its time and still is today. That’s how far-reaching his abilities are.

ROBERTO MASOTTI



“Secret Love”

Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers

BUTTERCORN LADY (Limelight, 1966)

A very young Jarrett, playing with Art Blakey on a very fast version of “Secret Love,” revolutionizes blowing on standards in the space of a four-bar break. Throughout Jarrett’s solo he plays something so rhythmically diverse, so ahead of its time, it sent my colleagues and I on a new path to fulfill the desire to play very free in form.



“All the Things You Are”

Keith Jarrett/Gary Peacock/Jack DeJohnette
STANDARDS, VOL. 1
(ECM, 1983)

On this and many other examples like it, Jarrett starts with the premise of impeccable bebop as a launching point. As he progressively stretches, the track evolves into a wild yet supremely disciplined blow on the changes. Again, the blend of unbridled nature with the highest development of musical elements is the hallmark. All most of us can do is practice and aspire to it.

“In Front”

FACING YOU (ECM, 1971)

There are so many things in this piece, starting with Jarrett's interactive left hand and subtle right-hand accompaniment. The harmonies are unquestioningly new; all the beautiful complexities of the head release into a hybrid boogie-woogie or barrelhouse style. In a period when jazz was hipper and unsentimental, Jarrett reintroduced early American elements that are taken for granted today—sort of inventing the country/gospel-style harmony employed by many contemporary artists. Similarly, in the '60s and '70s, the style of linear playing over chord changes tended to be more rhythmic than melodic and generally based on pentatonic scales. Jarrett reintroduced an element of ornamentation that had not been heard since the music of Liszt and Chopin.

“Starbright”

FACING YOU
(ECM, 1971)

Jarrett creates harmony that is very complex, simultaneously making it feel warm and very tonal. He brought the left hand back in a way not heard much since Art Tatum. What was even more amazing is that he did this without any nod to Tatum at all.

“All I Want”

THE MOURNING OF A STAR
(Atlantic, 1971)

This is a Joni Mitchell tune. What's notable is how similar her harmonic and melodic sense was to one corner of Jarrett's world. Jarrett's music comprised so many facets, and among them were the sensibilities of a folk musician. Generally speaking, when a jazz musician approaches pure chords (as can be found in folk music), the re-harmonization can diminish the resonance of the original song. Not so with Keith Jarrett. The album features Charlie Haden and Paul Motian.

“Standing Outside”

THE MOURNING OF A STAR
(Atlantic, 1971)

Here, although he wrote this song, Jarrett displays the same lyricism and harmony as Mitchell. He goes through many delightfully improbable transpositions and still manages to make it seem like a country folksong. The album is an early indication that Jarrett would create the juxtaposition of the most melodic and harmonically pleasing music and the most adventurous free improvisations, often in the same tune!

“There Is a Road (God's River)”

EXPECTATIONS (Columbia, 1971)

On this record the quartet with Dewey Redman, Charlie Haden and Paul Motian is augmented by Airto Moreira on percussion, Sam Brown on guitar and a string section. This piece starts with one of Jarrett's country/gospel-type motifs but then gives way to an orgiastic series of chords by the string section that he blows over. This track is an explosion of light.

“Death and the Flower”

DEATH AND THE FLOWER (Impulse!, 1975)

The band of Redman, Haden, Motian and percussionist Guilherme Franco was my favorite throughout much of the '70s. They play rhythm and sounds for a full six minutes before going into the most heartachingly beautiful ballad, “Death and the Flower.” They then move into a raw groove in which Redman re-interprets the changes. As with much of Jarrett's composition and style of playing, it captured my heart in a way that no one else could.

“The Windup”

Jan Garbarek/Keith Jarrett/Palle Danielsson/Jon Christensen
BELONGING (ECM, 1974)

The melody to “The Windup” is one of many Ornette Coleman-inspired heads written and performed in Jarrett's own incredibly high-charged manner. His tunes of this type are interesting because they're not so much an overt homage (which he may or may not have intended) as an attraction to a type of tonality that he and Ornette share. In his hands these melodies have a decidedly funky and country/gospel-like quality.

“Blossom”

Jan Garbarek/Keith Jarrett/Palle Danielsson/Jon Christensen
BELONGING (ECM, 1974)

“Blossom” is more than a ballad; it is a cry of the heart. Only Jarrett could go so far into the heart region, and his soloing extends that expression to the point of tears. The essentially sweet tune doesn't preclude the band from improvising in the most sophisticated way. **JT**



CHARLES MINGUS

BY CHRIS WOOD

CHARLES MINGUS IS MY FAVORITE BASS PLAYER and one of my all-time favorite musicians. I love his playing, his compositions and his attitude. He's sophisticated but raw. His playing is both primal and beautiful. He's fearless. What more could you ask for?

"Tensions"

BLUES & ROOTS (Atlantic, 1960)

Most of these tunes are examples of how Mingus takes the blues and twists it into endless, beautiful variations. This is basically a minor blues and features him (as on most of the tunes) taking a virtuosic solo.

"Cryin' Blues"

BLUES & ROOTS (Atlantic, 1960)

This is a great example of a pretty straightforward slow blues tune. Mingus is a very sophisticated musician but never comes across as slick. He maintains the raw and direct power of a bluesman.

"Original Faubus Fables"

PRESENTS CHARLES MINGUS (Candid, 1960)

This is the definitive version of this tune because he was allowed on this recording to include the lyrics. This is an example of Mingus the activist. Check out how incredibly Mingus and drummer Danny Richmond play together!

"Oh Lord, Don't Let Them Drop That Atomic Bomb on Me!"

OH YEAH (Atlantic, 1962)

This again is Mingus the activist, but this time he is both singing and playing the piano. It's no surprise that he's actually a great blues singer.

"What Love"

PRESENTS CHARLES MINGUS (Candid, 1960)

I picked this for the "conversation" that Mingus and Eric Dolphy have about 2/3 of the way into the tune. I think this was recorded about the time that Dolphy was thinking of leaving the band, and the musical dialogue they had was Mingus pleading with him not to leave. The ensemble playing is incredible throughout the whole track.



"Dizzy Moods"

MINGUS THREE (Blue Note, 1957)

This is a tune from a trio record with pianist Hampton Hawes and Danny Richmond. Nice to hear Mingus in this simple trio format.

"Goodbye Pork Pie Hat"

MINGUS AH UM (Columbia, 1959)

I had to include this classic, which is a haunting, twisted 12-bar blues.

"Money Jungle"

Duke Ellington
MONEY JUNGLE (Blue Note, 1962)

The last three tracks here are from the incredible Duke Ellington record called *Money Jungle*. It's Duke and Mingus with Max Roach on drums. The story I heard is that Mingus was mad because Duke wouldn't allow any of his compositions on the record. Mingus is on fire and playing way outside the box at times—maybe because he's pissed. It almost sounds like he's trying to disrupt the music, but Duke and Max are so strong that it holds together and makes for some of the most original trio playing I've ever heard.

"Fleurette Africaine"

Duke Ellington
MONEY JUNGLE (Blue Note, 1962)

This tune is so beautiful and original sounding, in large part because of the way Mingus plays. It's much more than accompaniment; he makes himself an important part of the piece.

"Switch Blade"

Duke Ellington
MONEY JUNGLE (Blue Note, 1962)

Another great example of a slow blues that showcases Mingus' virtuosity with a looseness that puts feeling before precision. Check out how he intersperses his basslines with countermelodies and answers to what Duke plays. **JT**



LEEMORGAN

BY RANDY BRECKER

LEE MORGAN HAS ALWAYS BEEN, SINCE I FIRST HEARD him when I was around 13, one of my absolute favorite players. We have a shared history. We're both from Philadelphia, and we had the same trumpet teacher, the incredible Tony Marchione, who first told me about Lee and what an individual he was. Shortly thereafter I heard a great trumpet player on the jazz station in Philly, and judging from his unique sound and execution, I said to myself, "That must be him!" (I was right!) From then on I was hooked. A couple of months later, Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers were playing at the Academy of Music on Broad Street and I was up in the balcony, amazed at the maturity and virtuosity of this 19-year-old trumpet master.

A few short years later when I was 19 and spending the summer of '65 in Seattle, the Messengers came to the Penthouse for a week with Lee, Gary Bartz, John Hicks, Victor Sproles and, of course, Blakey. I hung around Lee all week after citing my Philly credentials. He heard me play at an afternoon jam session at the club and told me to stick around and sit in with the band at the matinee. I was thrilled. When the time came he motioned for me to come up and play, so I jumped on the bandstand ready to play "A Night in Tunisia."

As soon as I started to play, Blakey went into a drum solo and started yelling at Lee, "I told you, no sitting in!"

Lee said, "But this kid can play!"

Art responded, "I don't care how good he plays—no sitting in!"

We stayed in touch after that, and Art *did* hire me in '69 and I stayed with him for about a year. These are not in any particular order. I just chose tunes that popped into my head first. They were instrumental in my development and I included some lesser-known solos.

"Blue Train"

John Coltrane

BLUE TRAIN (Blue Note, 1957)

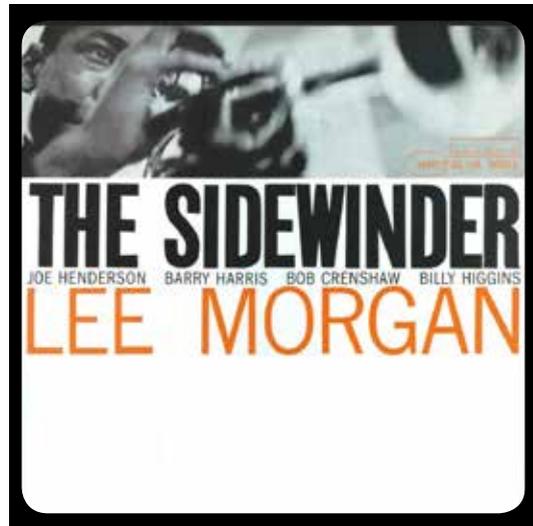
This was on the jukebox at the Brecker Brothers' NYC club, Seventh Ave. South, so I heard it night after night for 10 years. Such a flawless solo with Lee's signature double-time figures building until the end.

"Moanin'"

Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers

MOANIN' (Blue Note, 1958)

Soul personified. "You big fat mama," at the end of Morgan's solo, is quoted any time anyone plays a solo on this tune.



"The Sidewinder"

THE SIDEWINDER (Blue Note, 1963)

His best-known tune and Lee is slip-sidin' through the whole thing. Apparently the tune was an afterthought on the record. What a groove!

"You Go to My Head"

THE GIGOLO (Blue Note, 1965)

Great arrangement and great Wayne Shorter, and that half-valve slur at 3:04 gets me every time.

"A Night in Tunisia"

THE COOKER (Blue Note, 1957)

It was interesting to me to hear the Clifford Brown influence and how Lee put his own stamp on it at an early age. How do you develop that fast?

"This Here"

UNFORGETTABLE LEE! (Fresh Sound, 1960)

This features the Jazz Messengers live under Lee's name. They do "This Here," later made famous by Cannonball Adderley, but this was the first unknown version, so it's a cool thing to check out. Lee and Wayne take unbelievably creative solos, as does Bobby Timmons (who wrote this tune).

"Can't Buy Me Love"

BLUE BEAT: THE MUSIC OF LENNON AND MCCARTNEY (Blue Note; rec. 1964, rel. 1991)

Hokey head, but Stanley Turrentine and Lee had to try and outdo each other. All of Lee's devices are included in this one, and his chops are way up.

"Like Someone in Love"

Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers

LIKE SOMEONE IN LOVE (Blue Note, 1960)

Lee puts his stamp on a tune made famous in an earlier version featuring Kenny Dorham. The slow build at 3:14 is too much and the solo hangs together so well. **JT**



JACOPASTORIUS

BY JIMMY HASLIP

JACO'S VISION AND GIFT GAVE THE ELECTRIC BASS a new image and function, changing the perception and role of the instrument and giving us all a new sound in music. It literally changed the world of music and continues to be a gift to us all. I studied with him on and off for about a year beginning in 1975, and that experience completely changed my world. My perception of music and my study of music were, from that point on, taken to a whole new level. I will always be indebted, appreciative and grateful to him for what he gave me, and his teachings will continue to focus my study of music for the rest of my life. Thank you, Jaco!

"Continuum"

JACO PASTORIUS (Epic, 1976)

This was the first original composition by Jaco I listened to. It was a sound I'd never heard on the electric bass before. This piece is so fluid, melodic and expressive. This was mind-blowing, and he used octaves in such a creative way. The music was performed with so much freedom. I also couldn't help but notice his truly amazing sense of harmonic beauty and phrasing, not just in his solo but in his composition as well.

"Liberty City"

WORD OF MOUTH (Warner Bros., 1981)

This song was written for his big band. Uplifting and joyous. I love the introduction; with the horn solos, it's a perfect setup for what's to come. With a super sense of funk-driven R&B, Jaco created a wonderful vehicle for improvisation. I have several versions of this piece—all fantastic performances, yet the studio version from the *Word of Mouth* recording has the most amazing piano solo by Herbie Hancock. Absolutely thrilling!

"Three Views of a Secret"

WORD OF MOUTH (Warner Bros., 1981)

This is one of the most beautiful compositions in the Jaco Pastorius songbook—hauntingly beautiful, in fact. With simplicity and elegance, the melody is performed so eloquently by the virtuosic Toots Thielemans. This song brings out Jaco's talent as a composer. My favorite performance is on the Weather Report recording *Night Passage*, with delicate and interesting rhythmic support by Peter Erskine on drums and Robert Thomas Jr. on percussion.

"Donkey"

PAUL BLEY/PAT METHENY/JACO PASTORIUS/
BRUCE DITMAS (Improvising Artists, 1974)

This interesting jam piece appears on a recording later reissued as *Jaco* and features pianist Paul Bley, guitarist Pat Metheny, drummer Bruce Dittmas and, of course, Jaco on electric bass. This piece features so much great straight-ahead playing by



Jaco. He definitely had a great way of maneuvering through chord changes, and in this case creating harmonic structure in an improvisational setting. Jaco also plays great on "Missouri Uncompromised" on Metheny's *Bright Size Life* recording. Listening to that trio album is absolutely inspiring and stunning! Beautiful composition and performance by Jaco, Pat Metheny and drummer Bob Moses.

"Blackbird"

WORD OF MOUTH (Warner Bros., 1981)

I found this arrangement of the classic Paul McCartney composition extremely fascinating and amazing. Jaco takes this song to a whole other level, by offering the most beautiful bass work and expanding on the harmony, plus creating a percussive backdrop that is absolutely awe-inspiring. Again Toots Thielemans offers a wonderful melodic sound on the harmonica, and there is the occasional use of harp and some Mellotron-like synths and mandocello, which adds a more unique quality to this arrangement.

"Punk Jazz"

Weather Report MR. GONE (Columbia, 1978)

Here you have another brilliant composition that allows this band to showcase its wonderful and strong sense of harmony and musicality. Wayne Shorter's unique soprano saxophone combined with the genius of Joe Zawinul on synthesizers and Jaco's melodic beauty on electric bass—all perfectly motivated rhythmically by Peter Erskine on drums and Manolo Badrena on percussion. Glorious!

"Teen Town"

Weather Report HEAVY WEATHER (Columbia, 1977)

This has been a bass anthem since it was released. Truly the work of a genius—and funky as hell. Jaco also played drums on the studio version along with Alex Acuña on hi-hat. It set a seriously high standard for playing the electric bass. **JT**



SONNY ROLLINS

BY JOHN SCOFIELD

IN HIS PLAYING ON THESE STANDARD FORMS throughout *Now's the Time!* (RCA Victor, 1964), Sonny shows us how he mixes it up to keep his solos engaging: short phrases, long phrases, long tones, fast notes, space, melodies, intervallic structures, thematic development. He uses everything, and it keeps us interested.

He never gets bogged down. He's really on fire on this record.

"Now's the Time"

Sonny Rollins, tenor saxophone/Herbie Hancock, piano/Ron Carter, bass/Roy McCurdy, drums

This is one of the most beautiful, swingin' examples of a modern jazz-blues. And there are parts of the solo [that] every time I hear it, I start to sing along. *Now's the Time!* is very personal for me, because not only do I love it and know it really well, but it's [what I was listening to] when I was learning how to construct modern jazz in my own playing. I comped a lot of the solos. Even though I wouldn't learn the whole solo, just by ear little phrases would pop in.

"Blue 'n' Boogie"

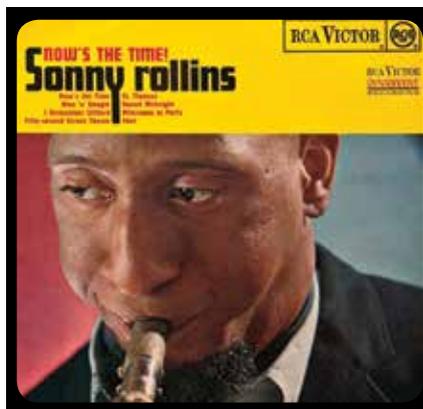
Rollins, tenor saxophone/Bob Cranshaw, bass/McCurdy, drums

They really stretch on this. The first tune is concise, but on "Blue 'n' Boogie," because it's a fast tempo, Sonny eats it up forever. First he's dissecting this funny little melody that "Blue 'n' Boogie" is, and he really has a thematic improvisation concept at work, where he'll take a little phrase and he'll play it all backwards and forwards. And doing that in rhythm is a great thing that Sonny did: taking little note cells and using them rhythmically, playing them on and off the beat. That's a lesson right there.

"I Remember Clifford"

Rollins, tenor saxophone/Cranshaw, bass/McCurdy, drums

It's just one chorus. He plays little bits of the melody, but mainly Sonny solos over the whole thing and it's incredible. It's a lesson in how to make a ballad recording. A lot of guys did that, where they would play a little bit of the melody and get right to improvising, and Sonny does that. And he plays a lot of fantastic, old-timey bits that almost sound like other tunes, other ballads, other jazz songs. Sonny had this fantastic relationship with melodies and songs, and he must know a million songs, because they come through in his playing and he uses those melodies.



"Fifty-Second Street Theme"

Rollins, tenor saxophone/Thad Jones, cornet/Cranshaw, bass/McCurdy, drums

This is another one of those melodies where Sonny can mess with it. It's this little theme and Sonny kind of takes it apart. It's really loose; you can tell he and Thad already know it, so they're having fun with it.

"St. Thomas"

Rollins, tenor saxophone/Carter, bass/McCurdy, drums

It's as if the producer, George Avakian, said, "Hey, Sonny, if we're going to play all these tunes by Miles and Dizzy and Monk, why don't you play one of your tunes?" So this is a remake of "St. Thomas," and it's really, really beautiful.

"Round Midnight"

Rollins, tenor saxophone/Hancock, piano/Carter, bass/McCurdy, drums

This song kills me, and Herbie Hancock just kills me with his chords. The way he voices this stuff, it's like Bill Evans-plus: his feel, the way he sets up a harmonic mood, the mood that he evokes on this song. Sonny, of course, sounds so fantastic playing this classic song, one of the great songs of all time.

"Afternoon in Paris"

Rollins, tenor saxophone/Hancock, piano/Carter, bass/McCurdy, drums

Somehow, in these three minutes you're able to hear everyone playing something beautiful and shining in an improvisational way. I love this track. I love the tune. I love Herbie's voicings. I love the way Sonny plays loose on this. He only gets two choruses to do the whole tune, and he alludes to the melody at first and then plays some of his own stuff in between. It sounds inspired and like a solo, even though he's still really playing the head.

"Four"

Rollins, tenor saxophone/Cranshaw, bass/McCurdy, drums

Again, I can sing parts of the solo. I love the way he breaks it up and trades with the band and lets them play and then comes back in, rejuvenated and playing all this amazing stuff. **JT**

[As told to Brad Farberman]

“As a musician
you have to keep
one foot back
in the *past* and
have one foot
forward into
the *future*.”

– DIZZY GILLESPIE, JAZZTIMES' FIRST SUBSCRIBER

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