

CAUGHT IN THE ACT

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the country's jazz public will soon be able to judge for themselves. At the festival's conclusion, Hammond announced that he would record the band for Columbia—an indication that collegiate jazz is now of age, as, indeed, the entire festival so tellingly proved. —Dan Morgenstern

Bill Evans

Town Hall, New York City

Personnel: Evans Trio—Evans, piano; Chuck Israels, bass; Arnie Wise, drums. Orchestra—Ernie Royal, Clark Terry, Bill Berry, trumpets; Bob Brookmeyer, Quentin Jackson, Bill Watrous, trombones; Bob Northen, French horn; Jerry Dodgion, George Marge, Eddie Daniels, Frank Perowsky, Marvin Holladay, reeds; Israels, bass; Grady Tate, drums; Al Cohn, arranger-conductor.

Surprisingly, this was Evans' New York concert debut. The happy results made clear that the concert format is perfectly suited to Evans, whose work invites and rewards the kind of concentrated listening possible in such a setting.

Evans' music is a delight—in good measure so because it utilizes the basic traditional materials of jazz without distorting or abusing them and with almost classic restraint and simplicity. Because of his mastery of the song form, Evans is able to inject into his work a wealth of nuance, re-creating the familiar, and uncovering endless possibilities in a realm others have discarded in favor of a "freedom" that too often becomes self-indulgence.

This concert was a model of intelligent organization. It presented Evans in three distinct settings: at the helm of his trio (surely one of the best integrated units of its kind), as a soloist, and as a functional sideman and soloist in a big-band format.

The trio segment came first and consisted of eight selections—two originals, four standards, and two superior ballads of recent vintage. Of the latter, Evans wrought a near-miracle with the much-abused *Who Can I Turn To?*, avoiding all bombast and sentimentality in his delicate rubato exposition of the theme, accompanied only by arco bass, and then moving into tempo with relaxed and flowingly swinging ideas. *Make Someone Happy* also became a vehicle for discovery, from the unaccompanied introduction to the bracing Bud Powell-like run at the end.

The originals were *Very Early*, a gently melodic air with a light waltz lilt, and *My Lover's Kiss*, a beautiful ballad. *Spring Is Here* became a shimmering impressionistic canvas. *I Should Care* brought out the full contour of the fine melody at a surprising medium-bounce tempo. And *My Foolish Heart*, usually a cloying thing in the hands of singers, was the premise for a very free and ingenious improvisation that barely sketched in the outlines of the tune.

Beautiful Love concluded the first segment. It was taken at an up tempo and featured Wise. Originally an East Coast substitute for Larry Bunker but now a permanent member of the trio, Wise is the best drummer Evans has had. Working mostly with brushes, he was a model of good taste and comprehension of Evans' musical aims, unintrusive but always there.

Bassist Israels, with Evans some five years, has more than filled the shoes of

his illustrious predecessor, the late Scott LaFaro. Israels is a fine technician, with a full, rounded tone, but the most impressive aspect of his work with Evans is his seemingly intuitive feeling for the direction of the pianist's improvisations. Israels soloed on nearly every selection, and it is a compliment to his gifts as a melodic player to note that these spots maintained the lofty level set by Evans.

Evans opened the second half of the concert with a new composition for solo piano titled *In Memory of His Father, Harry L. Evans, 1891-1966*. A three-part piece, it consists of a prolog, an improvisational section based on two themes in song form (*Story Line* and *Turn Out the Stars*), and a brief epilog.

On the basis of a single hearing (it was the kind of piece one immediately wanted to hear again), it is Evans' most impressive achievement as a composer. The prolog, not in a strict jazz idiom, was reminiscent of a Ravel piano piece, without being in the least derivative.

The middle section, played with jazz feeling and time, introduced a theme (*Stars*) of astonishing loveliness, developed in what surely was Evans' most remarkable playing of the evening. The startlingly brief epilog, less than a minute in duration, crystallized the mood and feeling of the entire piece. It was the kind of music about which it is difficult to comment because it was a complete and totally absorbing experience. (The audience was asked to refrain from applause at the conclusion of this section.)

The orchestral pieces (*What Kind of Fool Am I?*; *Willow, Weep for Me*; and Evans' *Funkallero* and *Waltz for Debby*) were performed without interruption, with brief transitions between tunes by either woodwinds or piano. Cohn's writing for woodwinds was particularly attractive and imaginatively colored.

There also were brilliant brass passages sparked by Royal's immaculate lead.

Though Evans was well featured, the arrangements were not piano showcases. Solos by Terry, Daniels, Dodgion, and Brookmeyer added excitement, with Terry particularly outstanding in a vehement plunger spot on *Fool*. Daniels, an excellent tenorist and clarinetist, shone on *Willow* with a dramatic tenor solo, and the theme of *Waltz* was introduced by Terry and Brookmeyer in their inimitable duo style. Evans dug in on the bright *Funkallero*.

Don't come to Evans looking for flash, funk, and surface emotion. But when it comes to creating music at the piano, Evans has few peers. —Dan Morgenstern

Titans of the Tenor Sax

Lincoln Center, Philharmonic Hall, New York City

Personnel: Albert Ayler, Coleman Hawkins, Yusef Lateef, Sonny Rollins, Pharoah Sanders, Zoot Sims, tenor saxophones; John Coltrane, tenor and soprano saxophones; Carlos Ward, alto saxophone; Donald Ayler Clark Terry, trumpets; Bob Brookmeyer, valve trombone; John Hicks, Roger Kellaway, Alice McLeod Coltrane, piano; Bill Crow, Waller Booker, Jimmy Garrison, bass; Rashid Ali, Dave Bailey, J. C. Moses, Mickey Roker, drums.

Though the original format of this concert—to present Hawkins, Sims, Rollins, and Coltrane as representatives of important and influential tenor saxophone

styles—was promising, the promise failed to materialize.

Instead of a concert, this was a chaotic, rambling, pointless "happening," seemingly designed to frustrate the audience and embarrass those artists who had come to play. If an enemy of jazz had plotted to make the music and the performers appear absurd and irresponsible, he couldn't have been more successful. To attend this event was an experience that made one doubt his own sanity.

It got under way with a brief but excellent set by Sims, who was accompanied by the rhythm section of the Terry-Brookmeyer group (Kellaway, Crow, Bailey).

Though Sims failed to adjust the microphone, and much of his work thus was barely audible, he produced a sequence of swinging blues choruses on Al Cohn's *Mama Flosey*, warming up the audience and the rhythm team. He followed with George Handy's pretty ballad *The Trouble with You Is Me*, playing with warmth, taste, and feeling.

Sims closed with an up-tempo version of *The Man I Love*, swinging in a relaxed and authoritative manner that was almost a definition of his Lester Young-based but personal style. Kellaway contributed a stomping, inventive solo, and Crow, a sturdy timekeeper not often heard in solo, held the spotlight for two excellent choruses.

Sims was followed by Terry and Brookmeyer, who did *Straight, No Chaser*. The horn men's work was swinging and humorous but seemed to lack their usual sparkle.

Next, Coleman Hawkins, looking the picture of a jazz patriarch with his flowing, grizzled full beard, joined the quintet. Immediately adjusting the mike (he was the only saxophonist of the night to do so), he launched *In a Mellotone* with a few well-chosen notes, instantly capturing the audience with his rich, golden, powerful sound. Hawkins unrolled seven flowing choruses, a tapestry of sound and rhythm that made his appearance the evening's undisputed highlight, though the great man was not at the top of his form.

Having made his mark, Hawkins begged off to enthusiastic applause, impervious to demands for more. (He had been contracted to do just one number.)

Emcee Dave Lambert, apparently slightly bewildered, remained on stage to sing *Hackensack* with the band and scattered with spirit, imagination, and wit. Lambert is a delightful performer; nevertheless, this was a rather anticlimactic ending to the first half of what still appeared to be a concert presentation.

The second part began with the entrance of Rollins' rhythm section (Hicks, Booker, and Roker), introduced by Lambert, who ended with: "And now—Sonny Rollins!" Nobody appeared. Undaunted, Lambert tried again. Still no Rollins. Lambert disappeared into the wings, and after a few suspenseful moments, Rollins emerged, dressed in a black turtle-neck polo shirt, dark slacks, and brown shoes. Horn in mouth, he produced a long, uninterrupted note while walking on stage.

Rollins had in tow an unannounced guest, Yusef Lateef. The two tenors launched *Sonnymoon for Two*, and Rol-

lins gave Lateef the first solo. While Lateef played (and very well), Rollins sauntered about the stage, occasionally testing the acoustics with fitting phrases from his horn. But when the time came for his solo, two or three tentative notes were all that happened. Hicks, expectantly, comped for an uneventful twelve bars, then started a solo of his own.

Meanwhile, Rollins had wandered across the stage. He now alerted the rhythm section for a downbeat, began *Hold 'Em, Joe*, abandoned the tune after a few bars, changed the tempo, began to play *Penthouse Serenade*, changed the tempo again, and then played a half-chorus of *Three Little Words*. While the rhythm section vamped, Rollins concluded this lightning

"medley" with thank-yous to the audience and the musicians. Then, with Lateef again in tow, he backed out into the wings, playing a tentative riff. The entire performance had lasted less than 10 minutes. Rollins returned briefly, quieting the cries of "more," to announce that he would be back later, with Coltrane.

After the confused sidemen had finally collected themselves sufficiently to leave the stage, Lambert announced Coltrane's group. Bassist Garrison, and drummers Ali and Moses caused no great surprise, though the group's new pianist did. But that was as nothing compared to what was still to come: Sanders, the Ayler brothers, and, a bit later, altoist Ward.

Sanders made his entrance carrying a

large brown shopping bag, subsequently found to contain tambourines, maracas, and other exotic rhythm accoutrements.

Coltrane, appearing relaxed and happy, gave his minions time to group themselves on stage while Garrison played nimble, flamenco-like solo bass. Coltrane then intoned *My Favorite Things* on soprano. A few restrained choruses was to be the sole reference to this point of departure during the following 35 minutes.

Coltrane soon yielded the solo spot to Sanders, who launched a gargling banshee-wail, which he sustained for the duration of his "solo." It was a grotesque display of willful ugliness. Sanders never touched the keys of his horn and was content with overblowing and creating no musical pattern of any kind, either melodic or rhythmic.

When it came to screaming, however, Sanders met his match in Albert Ayler, whose noises at least had some movement. Squeaking and squealing at lightning speed, he gave a convincing musical impression of a whirling dervish seized by St. Vitus dance.

Trumpeter Don Ayler came to bat next. Because he played with his horn's bell pointed at the floor, most of his solo was inaudible (the hall's poor acoustics, the racket set up by the two drummers, and the occasional "backgrounds" provided by the reeds didn't help either). What was decipherable seemed to be a series of rapid spurts of disjointed notes played with considerable frenzy but little else.

Ward's ensuing alto solo seemed a model of logic and restraint by comparison, though he didn't do much more than string together disjointed phrases taken from Coltrane and Ornette Coleman. He received no tangible assistance from the rhythm section—the two drummers never approached Elvin Jones in terms of excitement and drive, though certainly exceeding him in decibel count.

Ward now yielded to the Ayler brothers who fashioned a weird duet, a bit like the screaming contests little children sometimes indulge themselves in; it was scarcely more pleasing to the ear.

After this quaint interlude, Coltrane took to the mike and began to chant "Om-Mani-Padme-Hum" in a gentle singsong (while the other soloists played, he occasionally had joined the fray, three maracas in one hand). Coltrane concluded the set with a few relaxed moments of tenor. In this context, his playing sounded positively classic—but it was restrained Coltrane, by any standard.

The stunned audience collected its wits sufficiently to offer mild applause and scattered booing.

After this display one wonders what has happened to Coltrane. Is he the prisoner of a band of hypnotists? Has he lost all musical judgment? Or is he putting on his audience? Whatever the answer, it was saddening to contemplate this spectacle, unworthy of a great musician. It was not unlike watching Joe Louis wrestle, but then, Louis did that because he needed money. Coltrane, contracted for five pieces,

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undoubtedly paid his guests himself.

It is conceivable that Coltrane, an earnest and responsible man, has been persuaded that it is his duty to give musicians who presume to be his followers (though their "music" indicates nothing of the kind, aside from certain superficial mannerisms) the opportunity to be heard. For the last six months or so Coltrane has hardly made a single appearance without some member of the extremist faction. Thus, people who come to hear Coltrane are confronted with spectacles such as that which took place at Philharmonic Hall.

If Coltrane has an obligation, real or imagined, to these people whom he insists on carrying on his coat-tails, does he not also have an obligation to his audience? They come to hear him, not those others. They don't hear him. Will they come back? Coltrane is playing a dangerous game in which the risks are all his. The others, the have-nots, have nothing to lose. He does.

As for Rollins, one must assume that he intended to play with Coltrane but was scared off by the circus that ensued. His own set was hardly commensurate with his stature as a great player, but at least his guest was a man who can play his horn. As for Ayler and Sanders, they made a mockery of the use of the term "titans" in the concert's title. No one would envy these players the bookings they can get on the strength of their own work and following, but to ride on the reputation of others is deception.

—Dan Morgenstern

Hampton Hawes

Mitchell's Studio Club, Los Angeles

Personnel: Hawes, piano; Red Mitchell, bass; Donald Bailey, drums.

Pianist Hawes has been playing at Mitchell's (no relation to Red) Studio Club for several months, mostly with bassist Mitchell and drummer Bailey. The trio has developed a tight-ship sound and a repertoire that allows brisk but relaxed procedure of each set.

Hawes, I say disappointedly, has changed little since his mid-1950s prominence on the West Coast. Perhaps he is less blatantly a blues pianist of the pulpit-and-preacher sort; seemingly he has gathered some of the introspectively romantic more firmly into his ways, and he definitely has heard and begun to use some of the voicings that have grown out of the Bill Evans influence.

These last two additions to Hawes' playing modes surprise me. I would have predicted that he might have become an angry young Negro on the contemporary socio-musical scene, like Andrew Hill and Archie Shepp (I don't equate them). However, like Miles Davis, with whom he used to speak of playing cabbage and clabber instead of fruit salad like Dave Brubeck, Hawes has demonstrated a wish to withdraw musically from the overtly declamatory socialists and just play music, personal music. But whatever Hawes' intentions, conscious or otherwise, these two new inclusions that would help compose his new total musical concept are fitted together rather ungracefully—they do not blend and, instead, abut along uneven conceptual boundaries.

In part I must only guess what the trouble is. First, Hawes has more than

once stated that he is primarily a self-taught pianist. He attacks with tension and crispness (but occasionally brittleness instead of the latter). He is not afraid to push himself to his technical limits, but because of his mildly unorthodox keyboard approach, which might be analogous to a well-conceived but still hunt-and-peck method at the typewriter, there are strict limits beyond which speed and fluidity cannot proceed.

Second, although Hawes hears the voicings and technical feats (especially in block chording) that have become standard mechanics in the 1960s, he has apparently tried to incorporate these into his work without altering and improving his present pianistics in a formal way. I would guess he is relying solely on his ears and on-the-job practice. The result is that when Hawes tries to be something other than the rollicking blues-oriented pianist that many people thought quite satisfactory in the '50s, he is often ungainly and excitedly uncomfortable.

Hawes also uses a kind of corny format with anything but the blues. On every tune he played (except blues), he began out of tempo and alone, utilizing as always a frilly, flowery run that ended at the upper end of the piano as his principal device. He did not use the pedals in the punctuational damping and attenuation of a chordal sound that John Lewis and Bill Evans and so many others know as tellingly effective.

Hawes' best playing came on *Some Day My Prince Will Come*, but only after he got into tempo. Then he became freshly inventive and showed good control, unclashed improvisation, and some interesting freedom in meter and rhythm.

Mitchell and Bailey worked extremely well together. The bassist's consummate solo abilities are marked by a biting clear rhythmic sense, a pungent humor, and a rambling lyricality that make his every effort total delight. Bailey used mallets very well and was appropriately quiet but still pulsingly alive in his support.

For Bailey and Mitchell this trio is worth hearing often, and although I have strong reservations about Hawes, there is an undeniable shout and excitement to his work.

There may be a better way of summing up all this, but the extent to which the late Carl Perkins was a more rewarding player than Hawes is related to the basis for my qualifications about the latter. The drawing of a comparison between them is all the more meaningful and might have heuristic value for Hawes if he were to consider it.

Perkins, like Hawes, revealed very strong blues influences, was largely self-taught, and suffered, or at least was limited by, even worse technical habits. Yet Perkins never got involved in corny formats, blended his blues and sophistication well, and never fell into cliché or scale-running habits. How he accomplished his excellence in the face of his technical shortcomings I have no idea—maybe Leroy Vinnegar could tell me, or better yet, tell Hawes, about whom I remain frustrated and intrigued.—John William Hardy



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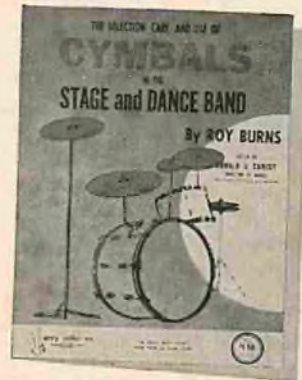
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