

Nica's Dream

Small Jazz Groups of the 50s and early 60s

New World NW 242

The decade (1955-1964) represented by this anthology was one of the most richly creative and exciting periods in the history of jazz. At no other time in the sixty-year documented history of the music were there more major contributors—ranging from Louis Armstrong and Coleman Hawkins to Miles Davis and Ornette Coleman—all actively performing and recording. At no other time did as many varied styles coexist.

The recordings included here fall significantly between the death of Charlie Parker in 1955 and the arrival of the Beatles in 1964. With the acceptance of the Beatles and the entire rock phenomenon, jazz began a decline in popularity that was not reversed until the seventies, when Miles Davis, as he had so many times in the past, steered the music in an entirely new direction, this time by absorbing the electric instruments and the rhythms of rock. Concurrent with the development of what has come to be known as jazz-rock a new interest in earlier styles was brought about by the record industry's initiation of a massive jazz-reissue program concentrating primarily on the post-1945 period.

Since there has been such a phenomenal quantity of jazz recordings reissued from the fifties and sixties, we have endeavored to present a representative anthology of material not available elsewhere. Given this limitation, this collection follows chronologically New World Records NW 271, *Bebop* and NW 284, *Jazz in Revolution: Big Bands in the 1940s*. Here you will find those musicians who effectively consolidated the developments of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, choosing to modify, though not radically alter, what had come before, as well as those musicians who began to find new directions that were to be further explored by the most advanced musicians of the next period (which will be covered in a future release).

Since jazz is primarily not a notated music, its method of documentation has always been recordings. Of all the myriad advancements in recording techniques the two that most significantly affected this music were the introduction of electrical recording in 1925 and that of the longplaying record in 1948. Until the long-playing record virtually all jazz performances were limited to the length of a threeminute ten-inch 78 rpm record, which yielded highly concentrated works that demanded the ability to make a concise musical statement in as little as eight bars. This enforced musical editing had its beneficial effects but restricted the development of extended solos of real quality and prohibited expanded arrangements. The introduction of the LP, which enabled jazz musicians to play a single piece for as long as twenty minutes, changed all this.

The new freedom was both developed to artistic advantage and abused to varying degrees. One of its best-known by-products was the "blowing session," in which a group of musicians (usually a rhythm section and at least two horns) was assembled to improvise on a standard tune or some simple blues usually created on the spot. Blowing sessions normally involved little or no planning, and their success depended on the chemistry among the musicians.

Critical reaction to this popular format tended to be negative, since there seemed to be a never ending barrage of such records, and it may have required extra effort to single out the truly stimulating from the merely routine. But a surprising amount of lasting music of this type was recorded, as can be heard in the reissues of the seventies (see *Discography*). None of the tracks on this anthology can properly be termed a blowing session since they tend to be more organized, but nearly all musicians here had plenty of opportunity to participate in such musical situations.

The first half of the fifties was not a particularly innovative period in jazz history. It was also an economically difficult time that saw many of the big bands formed in the thirties and forties forced to break up or scale down to smaller groups. It was a period when rhythm-and-blues-flavored jazz groups achieved reasonable success, older swing-era players often found work scarce, and most young jazz musicians continued to reflect the ideas of Charlie Parker.

It seems more than just coincidental that any number of musicians, many of whom are represented here, began to really come into their own artistically within the year after Parker's death. It was as if they were no longer free to carve their own niches, no longer obligated to demonstrate their allegiance to the musician who had so clearly dominated jazz for a decade. Sonny Rollins, Miles Davis, John Lewis, and Horace Silver all record major personal musical statements in 1956. Thelonious Monk, Charles Mingus, and George Russell, who were less under Parker's spell, also recorded landmark albums that year. (See Discography.)

In the year before Parker's death two of the most successful small bands of the fifties were formed. Drummer Max Roach, who was the rhythmic spark behind most of the great Parker records of the forties, combined with ascendant young trumpeter Clifford Brown to form what is generally considered the last of the great pure bop groups. But there were ways Brown-Roach, Inc., as they were sometimes called, differed from Parker's bands of the forties and fifties. The Brown-Roach groups paid more attention to carefully worked out arrangements and a cleaner ensemble sound, and while they continued to mine the lode of popular songs as jazz musicians had always done (including writing new melodic lines based on the chord changes of standards), the band also introduced several original compositions that have proven lastingly valuable. (The Brown-Roach Quintet with Sonny Rollins can be heard on NW 271, *Bebop*.)

Another quintet was the Jazz Messengers, whose initial members were pianist and musical director Horace Silver, drummer Art Blakey, trumpeter Kenny Dorham, tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley, and bassist Doug Watkins. Silver and Blakey were the guiding forces behind the band, and their musical attitudes shaped much of the jazz of the next ten years. The music Silver and Blakey played and still continue to play in 1977 has been variously called hard bop, funky, or soul jazz. It was rooted in the Parker tradition of which it was something of a simplification, and was in other ways a throwback to the Kansas City-style jump bands of the swing era, especially in its strong and regular rhythmic emphasis. The music had also absorbed a pronounced influence from the gospel music of black churches, a quality that made it more accessible to urban black audiences.

The combination of Blakey's drums and Silver's piano made for one of the most incendiary of all jazz rhythm sections. By 1956 they had gone their separate ways, Silver retaining Mobley and Watkins to form his own quintet while Blakey kept the Messengers' name and hired an entirely new band. Over the years a long list of talented young players came to prominence in these two groups. Blakey and Silver continued to record prolifically, and their very earth blues-based (and in the case of Silver especially well organized) approach to jazz became successful and was much copied.

While Blakey and Silver were reaffirming some of jazz's more Afro-American roots, a group of mainly Caucasian musicians-many of whom had been associated with the Woody Herman and Stan Kenton bands of the late forties and early fifties, and many of whom drew their inspiration from tenor saxophonist Lester Young-had been playing in a style usually referred to as cool or West Coast (where most of the exponents lived) jazz. This style, really much broader than easy labeling would make it seem, was a less earthy, more cerebral approach than that of Blakey and Silver. The cool style tended to emphasize written arrangements, but the bands often lacked the high caliber of soloists necessary to make them come alive. The music tended to be much less blues oriented than Blakey and Silver's. The key figures usually

associated with the cool style (although the term is only partly accurate in describing them) were baritone saxophonist Gerry Mulligan, tenor saxophonist Stan Getz, drummer Shelly Manne, pianist Dave Brubeck (who achieved unparalleled popularity in this period), and Lee Konitz (probably the most complex and original of these musicians).

An ensemble that is not as often linked with the cool style as it might well be is the Modern Jazz Quartet. Certainly in its restrained approach the MJQ is close to a cool sound, but what distinguishes them from other groups of the genre is a deep and genuine commitment to the blues, both in repertoire and in spirit. Composer-pianist John Lewis, the MJQ's musical director, was very formal in his approach to organizing the group's music, while vibraharpist Milt Jackson, one of the most naturally swinging of all jazz musicians, was a perfect foil for Lewis. The other original members were bassist Percy Heath and drummer Kenny Clarke (who was replaced by Connie Kay). The MJQ took pride in presenting themselves in such the same way as a classical chamber quartet would. They were one of the first jazz groups to regularly play concert hall as well as the more typical nightclub engagements. The MJQ outlasted all other jazz ensembles formed in the fifties. They officially disbanded in 1974, but they still occasionally regroup for special concert appearances.

Both hard bop and cool jazz were essentially conservative developments seeking to offer audiences a more accessible music than Charlie Parker at his most abstract and intense. While these two styles were garnering their share of acceptance (in the middle and late fifties nearly all the aforementioned musicians had albums that were hits, at least by jazz standards), newer directions were being explored, some of which can be heard in this anthology.

The central figures of this period who were pointing toward future developments are Thelonious Monk, Charles Mingus, George Russell, Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins, and John Coltrane. Monk (NW 271, *Bebop*), an innovator who was misunderstood and not widely appreciated in the forties, began to be heard more frequently in the mid-fifties. Generally considered the greatest jazz composer of the modern era, Monk imparted a new sense of form to the idiom with his strikingly original instrumental pieces (as opposed to the more typical songlike repertoire). As work and recording opportunities became more plentiful, Monk began key associations with several important musicians who benefited greatly from the challenge and discipline of his music. These included tenor saxophonists Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane. Virtually all the major modern-jazz drummers worked and recorded with Monk in the fifties, and the experience was mutually enriching, given the rhythmic possibilities of his music. In roughly chronological order these included Art Blakey, Kenny Clarke, Max Roach, Philly Joe Jones, and Roy Haynes.

Concurrent with development of the long-playing record was the improvement in recorded sound usually termed high fidelity (depending on the manufacturer, records with legitimate claim to that term were first produced in the late forties to middle fifties). It was now possible for the first time to hear all the detailed nuances of the drummer's contribution to the music. With the increasingly assertive roles played by drummers like Art Blakey and Philly Joe Jones this was a welcome development. One of the delights of listening to the jazz records of this period is to hear the ever-expanding polyrhythmic commentary being supplied by the percussionists. This new approach to the drummer's art was to reach its fullest flowering in the sixties.

The bass was probably the last instrument in jazz to be totally liberated from a specifically assigned role. Even with the important innovations of Jimmy Blanton in the late thirties (NW 274, *Jive at Five*), which led to bassists gaining more prominence as soloists, the bass continued well into the fifties to play primarily a timekeeping role in the rhythmic section. Charles Mingus was probably the first to play melodic

counterpoint rather than just “playing time” (laying down the proper notes in evenly timed pulsations). In this respect he probably deserves some of the credit usually given Scott LaFaro, who first appeared in the late fifties, for freeing the bass from its prescribed role.

Mingus and George Russell, both major jazz composers, led what tended to be arranger-composer workshop groups in this period. They usually performed with larger ensembles than Monk did, using more extensive but flexibly arranged structures that allowed their soloists considerable freedom. Mingus' band was actually called the Charles Mingus Jazz Workshop and was an important, if sometimes especially trying, learning experience for the many musicians who passed through it. Reed player Eric Dolphy, who may well have been the key transitional instrumentalist (as opposed to composer/group leader) between the Parker tradition and the new developments of the sixties, was one of these (see Discography).

One of George Russell's unique contributions to jazz has been his Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization, the most ambitious attempt to date to develop a theoretical basis for jazz composition and improvisation. Russell's first recorded work under his own name in 1956 helped bring to the fore the talents of pianist Bill Evans and trumpeter Art Farmer. The reason for Evans' initial impact can be heard in Concerto for Billy the Kid, Russell's showcase for Evans (NW 216, Mirage). At the time, Evans was a percussive, extrovert player who favored single-note lines in his right hand. By the time he joined Miles Davis' band in 1958 his playing had become much more introspective, drawing its character from a preponderance of subtly voice chords that were to influence an entire generation of pianists.

Miles Davis is the only jazz musician to have been an innovator over four decades. Earlier in his career he made significant contributions that influenced both the cool and the funky approaches (see Discography). The period covered by this anthology was especially fruitful for Davis. Like Art Blakey, Horace Silver, and Charles Mingus, Davis has always been a great discoverer of talent, and he has been influential as much through the members of his groups as through his own playing style. The band he formed in 1955, which included John Coltrane, pianist Red Garland, bassist Paul Chambers, and Philly Joe Jones, was a model jazz quintet of its day despite Garland's cocktail-piano propensities and Coltrane's not yet fully formed but always probing style. This band played a repertoire of popular standards and bebop compositions dating from the forties. But by 1959, when the landmark album Kind of Blue was recorded with Bill Evans on piano and a vastly improved Coltrane, there were significant additions to that repertoire that pointed to the future.

“So What,” from that album, became one of the most influential of all jazz recordings. Recorded at the end of a decade that saw jazz explore from nearly every possible angle the harmonic innovations of Charlie Parker, “So What” pointed in a new direction-improvisation based on scales or modes rather than a regularly recurring set of densely grouped chord changes. This new approach, more melodically than harmonically based, placed a greater burden on the improviser's melodic imagination, since its sparse harmonic underpinning left him with less of a recurrent structure on which to design his solo. He could no longer simply “run the changes,” in musicians' terms.

While it is true that Charles Mingus, George Russell, and Davis himself had examined the possibilities of scalar improvisation earlier in the decade, its full impact was not really felt until John Coltrane, shortly after the “So What” recording session, began a thorough exploration of its inherent ideas.

An important associate of Davis' in this period, Gil Evans (some of whom earliest work may be heard on NW 284, Jazz in Revolution), first came to prominence as an arranger for the Claude Thornhill band in the forties. After several years of relative inactivity in the fifties, Evans collaborated with Davis between

1957 and 1960 on three albums whose arrangements are among the most successful orchestral settings for a jazz soloist. During this period Evans also recorded two fine albums of his own, which include some brilliantly realized recompositions of jazz standards (see Discography).

During the late fifties the tenor saxophone, as played by Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane, again became the dominant jazz instrument, after being somewhat eclipsed by the alto saxophone in the Parker era. Rollins, who was at first better known than Coltrane, brought a highly developed rhythmic sense to his music. Taking a cue from Thelonious Monk, he began more and more to base his improvisations on the melody of a piece as well as following the more common practice of improvising just on the underlying chord sequence. Rollins' thematic approach to improvisation produced some brilliant work (see Discography) but was not directly influential on the jazz of the next decade, except possibly for Ornette Coleman. Coltrane, on the other hand, was at first involved with a virtually exhaustive exploration of chordal-based improvisation that he later rejected for the more melodic scalar approach (see Discography). This approach probably had a greater effect on the music of the sixties and seventies than any other single musical development.

It would be a mistake to think that all the best music during this era was created by the modernists. Many of the musicians who came to prominence in the twenties and thirties were still active, and musicians like Ben Webster, Coleman Hawkins, Buck Clayton, Red Allen, and Duke Ellington all produced excellent work in this period, sometimes in the company of much younger players.

Vocalist Billie Holiday, another figure from an earlier era, produced some of her most hauntingly emotional work in the late fifties. Other singers who made important contributions include Sarah Vaughan and Dinah Washington, both of whose initial impact had come in the forties, Chris Connor, Abbey Lincoln, and Betty Carter, who although she had been active since the late forties didn't begin to gain real recognition until the seventies.

There are many other musicians who made important, if not as widely appreciated, contributions during this period. Jazz would be a lot less rich without the music of Kenny Dorham, Booker Ervin, Elmo Hope, Steve Lacy, Booker Little, Jackie McLean, Herbie Nichols, Art Pepper, Wilbur Ware, and Randy Weston.

The Recordings

Side One

Band 1

Woody'n You

(Dizzy Gillespie)

Modern Jazz Quartet: John Lewis, piano; Milt Jackson, vibraharp; Percy Heath, bass; Connie Kay, drums. Recorded February 14, 1956, in New York. Originally issued on Atlantic LP (SD)-1231.

Dizzy Gillespie wrote this piece (also known as "Algo Bueno") for the Woody Herman band as an accompaniment for tap dancers. It was never recorded by Herman but made its initial appearance on records on a 1944 Coleman Hawkins date that featured Dizzy. In 1947 it was recorded by Dizzy's big band whose rhythm section and Dizzy's early-fifties small groups the Modern Jazz Quartet eventually emerged. By the time the MJQ recorded "Woody'n You," original drummer Kenny Clarke had been replaced by Connie Kay.

The MJQ has often been thought of as the premier chamber jazz ensemble. This can best be heard in the opening chorus. Solos by Jackson and Lewis follow. Jackson's statement, with its many notes, flows with ease of execution that he displayed at almost any tempo. Lewis' choruses emphasize his light touch with cleanly articulated right-hand lines and sparingly applied chords for appropriate coloration. Close listening to Lewis' accompaniment of Jackson is warranted. It has often been observed that in his comping Lewis does not simply lay down the proper chords but feeds melodic ideas as well.

Percy Heath, who was much in demand for recording sessions in the period, demonstrates the good time, tone, and choice of notes that has made him one of the great modern-jazz bassists.

After the conclusion of Lewis' piano solo the melody that is played (the out chorus) is different from the one played at the beginning. Only in the last eight bars do we hear the original theme.

Band 2

Donna Lee

(Charlie Parker)

Lee Konitz with Warne Marsh: Lee Konitz, alto saxophone; Warne Marsh, tenor saxophone; Sal Mosca, piano; Billy Bauer, guitar; Oscar Pettiford, bass; Kenny Clarke, drums.

Recorded June 14, 1955, in New York. Originally issued on Atlantic LP-1217.

Some say that this intricate melodic line (based on the chord changes of the popular song "Indiana"), credited to Charlie Parker, was actually written by Miles Davis, who played trumpet on the 1947 Parker date that produced the original version.

Here is interpreted by four musicians who were closely associated with pianist-composer-teacher Lennie Tristano (NW 216, *Mirage*). The other members of the group, Kenny Clarke and Oscar Pettiford, were two of the first and two of the best exponents of bebop rhythm style. They were somewhat unusual choices for the Tristanoites, who tended to favor a lighter, more metronomic rhythm section.

Lee Konitz' dry, lean style successfully melds some of Tristano's advanced harmonic ideas with a rhythmic approach that combines the relaxed legato flow of Lester Young with more staccato sharp-edged accents of Charlie Parker. An adventurous musician who has performed in a wide variety of musical settings, Konitz approaches his improvisations with a rigorous and inquisitive mind that avoids cliché.

Wayne Marsh at the time of this recording tended to be thought of as someone who merely transferred Konitz' alto lines to the tenor (one of the most likely reasons is that his highly unorthodox tone made it sound much like he was playing an alto). But he is much more of an individual player than that, and in his often unpredictable placing of accents and in the way his phrases seem to evolve organically out of one another, Marsh is an original musician.

Another interpretation of "Donna Lee" may be heard on NW 284, *Jazz in Revolution*, where it is played by the Claude Thornhill Orchestra.

Band 3

Nica's Dream

(Horace Silver)

The Jazz Messengers: Donald Byrd, trumpet; Hank Mobley, tenor saxophone; Horace Silver, piano; Doug Watkins, bass; Art Blakey, drums.

Recorded April 5, 1956, in New York. Originally issued on Columbia CL-897 (mx # CO55736).

“Nica’s Dream” is one of the many compositions dedicated to Baroness Pannonica (“Nica”) de Koenigswarter, a great friend of jazz musicians since the early fifties, when she first came to New York. Thelonious Monk’s “Pannonica” and Gigi Gryce’s “Nica’s Tempo” are other well-known tributes to the jazz baroness, as she has been called. Silver recorded this piece again in 1960 for Blue Note, and it has also been done by several other groups.

The band heard here was the second edition of the Jazz Messengers, with Donald Byrd replacing Kenny Dorham. Shortly after this recording Blakey and Silver formed separate groups.

“Nica’s Dream” is one of Silver’s most memorable compositions and is typical of his best work at the time. Its rich harmonies and rhythmic shadings, the latter especially noticeable in the bridge, give the soloist much substance on which to develop his improvisation.

Hank Mobley, who solos first, displays a burry warmth in his tone, a sound somewhere between the cool lightness of Stan Getz and the harder edge of Sonny Rollins or John Coltrane. Here Mobley’s ideas flow readily, spurred on by the superb rhythm section. Never a particularly fashionable tenor player, Mobley has been more influential than he is usually give credit for. Saxophonists like George Coleman, Tina Brooks, Clifford Jordan, and Junior Cook all absorbed something from his sound and his rhythmic ideas.

At this time and for the next few years Donald Byrd was probably the most in-demand trumpet sideman in jazz and appeared on countless record dates. An inconsistent soloist he is in good form here, playing a graceful melodic solo that draws on both Miles Davis and Clifford Brown.

Silver is one of the great piano accompanists-his percussive, perfectly placed chording is always a stimulus to the soloist. His won solo begins with a characteristic trill and continues in his typically blues-oriented, direct and uncluttered style.

Due to the nature of the material, Blakey is somewhat subdued. But his bright cymbal work is a delight, and he maintains the Latinish rhythmic feel with just the right touches without.

Blakey and Silver’s later work in the fifties had a more pronouncedly funky sound that is evident in “Nica Dream” (see Discography).

Silver and Blakey may be heard playing Silver’s “Stop Time” on NW 271, Bebop.

Side Two

Band 1

Blues March

(Benny Golson)

Art Farmer-Benny Golson Jazztet: Art Farmer, trumpet; Curtis Fuller, trombone; Benny Golson, tenor saxophone; McCoy Tyner, piano; Addison Farmer, bass; Lex Humphries, drums.

Recorded February 6, 9, or 10, 1960, in New York. Originally issued on Argo LP(S)-664.

This piece, one of Benny Golson's best-known compositions (others include "Along Came Betty," "I Remember Clifford," and "Whisper Not"), became something of a jazz standard in the late fifties and the sixties. The original version was recorded for Blue Note by Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers when Golson was musical director of that group (see Discography). The present version comes from the first album by the Jazztet, a sextet led cooperatively by Golson and Art Farmer from 1959 to 1962, whose repertoire featured Golson's compositions and arrangements.

While "Blues March" is a sophisticated and catchy novelty piece, it is also a direct link to some of jazz's earliest roots—the marching bands of New Orleans. In its adherence to the unrelenting backbeat throughout, it is another attempt to produce a simpler, more accessible post-Parker type of jazz.

Soloists here are Art Farmer, one of the most lyrical and understated jazz trumpeters, who later exclusively played fluegelhorn, and the technically facile young trombonist Curtis Fuller, best known for his work with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers in the sixties. Farmer's notes are carefully chosen, and while this is not a typical vehicle for him, he plays an effectively punchy solo. Fuller, who is usually considered one of the best disciples of J. J. Johnson, plays with a bite that his mentor often lacked.

Also heard here, in an ensemble role on one of his earliest record dates, is McCoy Tyner, who was to become a major influence on the pianists of the sixties and the seventies.

Band 2

Now's the Time

(Charlie Parker)

Sonny Rollins & Co.: Sonny Rollins, tenor saxophone; Herbie Hancock, piano;

Ron Carter, bass; Roy McCurdy, drums.

Recorded May 5, 1964, in New York. Originally issued on RCA LPM(LSP)-2927 (mx #7).

Sonny Rollins, who truly came into his own about the time he joined the Clifford Brown-Max Roach group in late 1955, can be heard as a member of that ensemble on NW 271, *Bebop*. The remainder of the decade was an especially prolific time for him. Recording for several different labels with some of the best rhythm section of the day, he produced work that is among his greatest (see Discography). Then unexpectedly he retired from music and did not play again in public for more than two years.

By the time Rollins recorded this piece he had already been strongly affected by some of the newer developments in jazz, going so far as to hire two former members of avant-gardist Ornette Coleman's band for his own group in 1963. "Now's the Time," a simple riff blues written in 1945 (it later became a rhythm-and-blues hit as "the Hucklebuck"), could just as well have been written in the swing era in that it displays none of the rhythmic complexity of most bebop blues lines. Rollins plays it with an appropriate reverence for its basic roots and gets much mileage out of the repetition and development of single phrases in his opening choruses. He begins his second solo very abstractly with one long continuous phrase in a jagged, constantly swerving rhythm that gradually becomes less convoluted before masterfully evolving into return to the theme.

Two much younger players who were to become major influences in the sixties and seventies are also heard. Herbie Hancock displays much rhythmic dexterity as he synthesizes elements of the styles of his town immediate predecessors in the Miles Davis band, Wynton Kelly and Paul Chambers. Ron Carter's supportively elastic bass lines are an extension of the work of Paul Chambers, who he replaced in the Davis group.

Band 3

War Gewessen

(David Baker)

George Russell Sextet: Don Ellis, trumpet; David Baker, trombone; Dave Young, tenor saxophone; George Russell, piano; Chuck Israels, bass; Joe Hunt, drums.

Recorded September-October, 1960, in New York. Originally issued on Decca DL-(7)4183.

George Russell's reputation rests primarily on his compositions, his theoretical contributions, and his several fine recordings. He has not often been a working bandleader. From 1960 to 1964 he did not keep a regular group together with a relatively stable personnel. David Baker was present on all but one of the six albums the Russell Sextet recorded in those years. In addition to his playing, Baker contributed several compositions and arrangements.

"War Gewessen" (German for "it has been"), from the sextet's second album, is an example of the new approaches to jazz composition that were beginning to appear. It effectively contrasts a very "modern" sounding scale-based sixteen-bar opening section with a more conventional twelve-bar blues section and then returns to eight more bars of scale-based material. Each soloist (Young, Ellis, Baker, Russell, Israels) plays a well-organized one chorus structure.

The intricate, rhythmically jagged melodic theme has a stop-and-start feeling, enforced by the call and response between ensemble horns and Russell's piano. The contrasting tempos of the blues section and the scalar sections also adds interest to the piece.

Russell's piano accompaniment throughout is worth special attention. His pungent, jabbing chords provide a focus for both the rest of the rhythm section and the horn soloists.

Band 4

Original Faubus Fables

(Charles Mingus)

Charles Mingus Jazz Workshop: Eric Dolphy, alto saxophone; Ted Curson, trumpet; Charles Mingus, bass and vocal; Dannie Richmond, drums and vocal.

Recorded October 20, 1960, in New York. Originally issued on Candid CDM/CJS 8005/9005.

Mingus first recorded this monumental work for Columbia in 1959 as "Fables of Faubus" (Orville Faubus was the segregationist governor of Arkansas). Columbia refused to allow him to include the somewhat controversial lyrics. When a year later Mingus redid the piece for the adventurous but short-lived Candid label he presented it in its original form with lyrics intact.

This is one of the first strong, specific statements by black modern-jazz musicians about the situation of black people in America (Max Roach's Freedom Now Suite, recorded a few months earlier for the same label, is another).

What has always been most striking musically to me about his record is the fantastically large sound Mingus was able to draw from only four instruments and two voices. His true genius as a composer-orchestrator and group leader is everywhere in evidence here.

The structural outline and arrangement is anything but ordinary—there is no conventional theme statement, no string of solos, and no repeat of theme as in most jazz pieces. But "Faubus" is very typical of Mingus in that it uses a constantly changing musical palette, with accelerandos and decelerandos, shifting time signatures, a wide dynamic range, and the introduction of new melodic material and secondary themes. Yet it is all unified in such a way that we are hardly even conscious of the difference between written and improvised sections.

One reason for the cohesiveness of the group is that they had been playing this music nightly in a Greenwich Village club before making the record. Although this was recorded in a studio, the intent was, as much as possible,

to re-create the atmosphere of the club, which is the reason for Mingus' spoken introduction. The music is challenging' and difficult, but Ted Curson and Eric Dolphy rise to the occasion.

Dolphy, who also played bass clarinet and flute, was one of the most intense and adventurous of the new jazz musicians who were trying to expand the vocabulary of the music. His work with Mingus in 1960 is generally considered among the best of his short career (Dolphy died in 1964 in Berlin, where he had settled after touring Europe with Mingus). His crying saxophone sound with its speech-like effects is especially appropriate to the subject matter of the piece.

Curson at the time was a promising young trumpeter also willing to explore new musical territory. Like Dolphy he was rooted in a more traditional type of playing but was also comfortable in more freely structured settings.

There is probably no more flexible or attentive rhythm section in all of jazz than Charles Mingus and Dannie Richmond. Richmond, whom Mingus discovered when he had been playing drums for only a year, is not often mentioned among the great modern-jazz drummers, most likely because he has played only occasionally outside Mingus' ensembles. His crisp swinging sound, superb sense of dynamics, and ability to switch directions in split seconds should rank him with the best. Mingus and Richmond, who have been a rhythmic team almost continuously for twenty years, can be rivaled only by the combination of Count Basie's piano and Freddie Green's guitar for quality and longevity among jazz rhythm sections.

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