

NORTHGATE HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMING ARTS DEPARTMENT

Jazz Listening 11/28/2011 Notes

1. Blues for Sam Nassi

Album: The 20th Concord Jazz Festival all Stars

Composer: Ray Brown

Artists: Soloist: Harry "Sweets" Edison - trumpet, Gene Harris – piano, Red Holloway – tenor sax

Recorded: 1989

Personnel: Harry "Sweets" Edison-trumpet, Red Holloway-tenor sax, Gene Harris-piano, Ray Brown-bass, Jeff Hamilton-drums

The Concord Jazz Festival is now defunct but while it last it was hosted in Concord, CA. At First it was hosted in a park near Concord High school then at the Concord Pavilion. Over the years I heard Count Basie, Tito Puente, Benny Goodman, Lionel Hampton, Woody Herman, Oscar Peterson, Buddy Rich, Mel Torme, Joe Williams, Poncho Sanchez and many others. I even played there with a youth all star jazz band to open one of their shows. Featured in this recording are sweets Edison, long time Basie trumpeter who always played with great time and controlled development in his solos; Red Holloway who was a fantastic blues player (a great person to steal blues licks from); and Gene Harris whom you have now heard many times with his super Bluesy piano style.

2. Uptown Sop

Album: Gene Harris Trio plus 1

Composer: Ray Brown

Artists: Gene Harris-piano, Stanley Turrentine-tenor sax, Ray Brown-bass, Mickey Roker-drums

Soloists: Gene Harris-piano, Stanley Turrentine-tenor sax

Recorded: 1985

This is one of the most soulful Albums that I have in my collection. Turrentine and Harris just plain get down. This is how it is supposed to feel! Turrentine paces his first few choruses extremely well. He plays a lot of blues clichés, perfect for stealing! The rhythm section grooves so hard and the breaks are set up so well by the drummer and with so much authority that they just sound as if they were reading a chart and just playing what was on the page. Gene Harris' comping behind the sax solo consists of riffs (repeated figures that change slightly - just changing the 3rds and 7ths) to follow the changes in the blues progression. That repetition placed perfectly in time aids the groove incredibly.

3. Sir John

Album: Blue's Moods

Composer: Blue Mitchell

Artists: Blue Mitchell – trumpet, Wynton Kelly – piano, Sam Jones – bass, Roy Brooks - drums

Soloists: Blue Mitchell – trumpet, Wynton Kelly – piano, Sam Jones - bass

Recorded: 1960

Sam Jones really pulls hard and drives the time while Roy Brooks is locked exactly in with him, making it feel great. That and the combination of the way Blue Mitchell lays back in the time makes this really swing. Wynton Kelly's feel is similarly just behind the groove which feels great as well. Blue really takes his time developing his solo very slowly. The first two choruses use a lot of space. Notice how Kelly uses Blue's last lick to build a long sequence fill up almost his all of his first solo chorus. I really enjoy Sam Jones' bass solos because every gesture or lick is so clear and he has a very funky way of bending his notes which gives a great blues feeling.

4. Blue Monk

Album: Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers with Thelonious Monk

Composer: Thelonious Monk

Artists: Johnny Griffin – tenor sax, Bill Hardman – trumpet, Thelonious Monk – piano, Splanky Debrest – bass, Art Blakey - drums

Soloists: Johnny Griffin – tenor sax, Thelonious Monk – piano, Bill Hardman – trumpet, Splanky DeBrest - bass

Recorded: 1957

Johnny Griffin develops his first chorus but then dives in to double which he is especially good at. Monk's piano solo typically develops motives or ideas from the melody in a very methodical way. Bill Hardman's solo is a nice mixture of blues/bebop licks/ and extended development of motives.

5. Mama Don't Wear No Drawers

Album: Basie Jam 2

Composer: Count Basie, Benny carter, Clark Terry

Artists: Count Basie – piano, Clark Terry – trumpet, Benny Carter – alto sax, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis – tenor sax, Al Grey – trombone, Joe Pass – guitar, J.C. Heard – bass, Louis Bellson - drums

Soloists: all of the above except Louis Bellson and J.C. Heard

Recorded: 1976

This melody is just a repeated riff that changes 3rds or 7ths to fit the blues chord progression. Clark Terry's solo shows a very sophisticated use of the plunger mute. It sounds like he's explaining something to someone. Appropriately, there is a great use of dynamic contrasts, range and varied subdivision, which helps him develop the solo just as if he was telling a story. Benny Carter's solo bounces along lightly on the beat and express a whole lotta joy. Notice that he takes his time in developing his solo saving a little bit of double time for the very end. Joe Pass plays more bebop in his solo than the others but does so without using double time at all. His lines are all very nice and right in the middle of the time ala Charlie parker. Al Grey is one of the most soulful trombone players that I know. He starts out easy but really let things simmer and finally his solo comes to a boil just before he winds it down. Check out how he plays a very simple melodic blues idea as he eases things back down. Notice Lockjaw's use of the lick 9,7,5,3,2,1 in sequence. Count Basie's use of silence in his solo and his perfect placement of his notes show what is meant by the term "to swing."

6. Kansas City Line

Album: Basie Jam 2

Composer: All the soloists

Artists: Count Basie – piano, Clark Terry – trumpet, Benny Carter – alto sax, Eddie “Lockjaw” Davis – tenor sax, Al Grey – trombone, Joe Pass – guitar, J.C. Heard – bass, Louis Bellson - drums

Soloists: all of the musicians

Recorded: 1976

Here’s another blues riff. Basie’s solo comes first. Notice the riffs played behind his solo ever so softly by the brass in mutes. Joe Pass plays more of his perfect bebop lines mixed with some nice riffing in sequence and blues licks then back to bebop then back to some tasty blues. Clark Terry is back with his plunger mute. Check out the extreme variance of tone quality that he adds to his plunger effects and growls to make a broad and expressive sound palate. Lockjaw does some growling of his own (a specialty of his). His playing is very declamatory, much like a great public speaker or a preacher in a Baptist Church. Al Grey continues with some plunger of his own. He’s one of the best trombone players at plunger effects that I have heard. He uses a pixie mute in his bell then adds the plunger. A trick he probably learned from “Tricky” Sam Nanton and Lawrence Brown of the Ellington band. Benny Carter uses a very understated sound and articulation which is a nice elegant contrast to Al Grey’s and Lockjaw’s dirty gut bucket style. One of the best things about this recording is that you get the distinct voice of each soloist. Everyone’s sound is unique. This display of individual expression is wonderful because every player’s own unique personality comes through adding a great deal of variety to a simple medium slow blues. There is no way they could keep a fifteen minute track at this tempo interesting without their beautiful individual expressions.