

of big bands on the wane, Gonsalves' remarkable 27 choruses on "Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue" at the 1956 Newport Jazz Festival, made the news and re-instated Ellington's popularity. The piece is a sterling example of Duke's deft incremental writing in intricately exciting orchestral choruses. JLCO suggests the Newport version, but focuses the listener more on the entire composition.

For more info visit jazz.org. Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis is at Rose Theater Feb. 27-28. See Calendar.



Here's Lee Morgan
Lee Morgan (Vee-Jay - Craft Recordings)
by Jason Gross

This 1960 recording, *Here's Lee Morgan*, was the tenth album from the renowned hard bop trumpeter, who mostly recorded for Blue Note and significantly was part of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (1958-61). Here, as leader, he assembled a dream band, including Clifford Jordan (tenor), Wynton Kelly (piano), Paul Chambers (bass) and employer at-the-time Blakey (drums). Presented without the CD edition alternate takes, this 180gr vinyl reissue is nonetheless impressively done, with all-analog mastering from the original tapes as part of the label's Original Jazz Classics series.

The exciting Morgan-composed "Terrible 'T'" features insistent horns marching in, following bassist Chambers, who sets the tone with a distinctive, introductory bass line. The trumpeter gets the first solo, with joyously, loudly-stretched notes, adding staccato bursts with Jordan then varying the theme with occasional honks and squeals over Blakey's press rolls, before the horns together charge in again after Kelly's bouncy, soulful piano solo. A similar pattern follows on another leader original, "Mogie", which starts with a soulful horn theme. The leader then rings out passionately, with Jordan forward, playing lyrically, and Kelly's contributions adding a playful element. Morgan comes roaring back in, interspersed with Blakey's rollicking breaks before the horn-carried theme returns. "I'm a Fool to Want You", a ballad often associated with Frank Sinatra's angst-ish interpretation, isn't as pained as the original but conveys some of Ol' Blue Eyes' misery; Morgan chokes up on some notes and later focuses on his lower register to convey the song's melancholy theme, as Jordan gently weaves around as if to offer comfort and consolation.

Side two begins with the wonderful, soaring breezy horn theme of Wayne Shorter's "Running Brook" (sounding like an Earth, Wind & Fire precursor), which leads to a measured, upbeat Jordan tenor solo, followed by Morgan's wild trills and an elegant piano break by Kelly. Milt Jackson's "Off Spring" has a swinging horn melody at the start and finish, plus some blistering Blakey drum fills, a cheerful Jordan solo and Morgan's screaming solo with inserted, poignant pauses. The leader's calming "Bess" ends the album with a charming solo, plus affectionate back-and-forth from the horns frontline as well as Jordan's assured and smooth feature and a lithe turn by Kelly.

The future would hold great triumphs for Morgan, with crossover hits such as on *Search for the New Land* and particularly *Sidewinder*, before his life was then

tragically cut short at the age of 33, exactly 54 years ago this month. Though *Here's Lee Morgan* might not match his renowned '60s classics per se, it's an enjoyable ride regardless, and a master class in hard bop from one of its best practitioners.

For more info visit craftrcordings.com



Monk'D
Dayna Stephens (Contagious Music)
by Fred Bouchard

Thelonious Monk's absolutely unique canon consists of at least 70 tunes, most written between 1947 and 1960. A few are "jazz hits," more than a handful widely played; and many were tunes seldom revisited (recorded one-offs) even by the composer. Monkophiles and creative experimenters continued to mine these rough-cut diamonds in personalized settings (Steve Lacy, Hal Willner, as well as a host of transfixed pianists: Frank Carlberg, Frank Kimbrough, Jessica Williams, Misha Mengelberg). In sum, Monk ranks second only to Duke Ellington in recorded interpretations.

On *Monk'D*, tenor saxophone player Dayna Stephens weighs in with an amiable quartet tribute, lasered on monastic rarities. Even online you can catch the band lean happily into "Brake's Sake" and "Humph" – both with repeated phrases, quirky turnarounds and small Monk profiles – and "Coming on the Hudson" (which retains the ghostship spookiness of the Columbia quartet original). This album features Ethan Iverson (piano), Stephen Riley (tenor) – who emulates the heady, smoky tone of Charlie Rouse, Monk stalwart through the '60s – and Eric McPherson (drums). But wait! Hang on! Who's on bass? It's Stephens! *He's playing bass!* Punk'D! Turns out (find those liner notes) Stephens has dabbled on bass since student days at Berklee College of Music and later at the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz. He also toured with the dynamic Lavay Smith, performed with trumpeter Roy Hargrove and took lessons on gigs with bassists Ron Carter and Christian McBride. When playing tenor he says he picks his bassists "to lead the band; they control the root notes of all the harmonies...and the feel of the pulse..." As bassist here, Stephens keeps his head down, ears cocked, centers notes and harks back to emulate the poise of Monk bassists such as John Ore and Larry Gales.

The band's vagaries of time and tide on *Monk'D* toss about Monk goodies: "Ugly Beauty" bends as Monk's lone waltz into 4/4; "Stuffy Turkey" trusses up a half-tone mid-chorus; "Coming on the Hudson" swirls in a cross-current maelstrom. There's a plausible mash-up of "Evidence" with its root standard and an original. Bad-boy Iverson wafts "Ruby My Dear" into a sanctified Scriabin-sphere. But the band keeps cool and cozy: no bent-finger trickies like "Trinkle Tinkle" or "Off Minor". McPherson keeps time playful around the boss' steady groove. The title cut is a loose, fade-away blues. The band cruised the blues jam to wrap the sunny set in one day at Rudy Van Gelder's iconic Englewood Cliffs, NJ temple of the Blue Note, a hallowed ground in no small part due to its history with Monk, the "High Priest of Bebop."

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