

The Jazz Messengers – The Jazz Messengers at The Café Bohemia, Volume 1  
Blue Note – King Record Company, Limited

The impact of Art Blakey on the jazz world, both as a bandleader and drummer was immense, helping to shape the artistic style of Hard-Bop for thirty-five years until his death in 1990. It was his creative and unique perspective that enabled The Jazz Messengers to become one of the greatest groups in the world. The Jazz Messengers at The Café Bohemia, Volume 1 (Blue Note BLP-1507) features Blakey, his co-leader of the quintet Horace Silver on piano; Kenny Dorham on trumpet; Hank Mobley on tenor sax and Doug Watkins on bass in the first of two performances at Café Bohemia in Greenwich Village. My copy used in this report is the 1978 King Record Company Limited Japanese Mono reissue (Blue Note GXK 8102 (M) – BLP 1507). Mr. Blakey begins the album by addressing the crowd, letting them know that they're about to be part of a recording session, ending with the introduction of The Jazz Messengers.

The quintet starts the set with Soft Winds, the 1940 jazz standard written by Benny Goodman and Fred Royal. This song was a feature for The Benny Goodman Sextet, and numerous other musicians and vocalists including harpist Dorothy Ashby, Chet Baker, Charlie Parker, Oscar Peterson, and Dinah Washington have also recorded it. The tune opens with the ensemble establishing the opening chorus at a relaxing tempo, setting the stage for three lengthy statements by Mobley, Dorham, and Silver that follow. Hank is up first and the excellent solo work exhibiting his agility and improvisational ideas are gratifying alongside the rhythm section echoing him in the background. Kenny turns in a pleasant performance of lilting charm next, then Horace gives plenty of pleasure to the mind and senses on the closing statement preceding the modest out-chorus.

Dorham didn't just play trumpet for The Jazz Messengers; he also provided the arrangements for

each song on both volumes and composed three of the tunes on this album. Kenny's The Theme ends the first side at high-speed with vigorous solos from everyone. Blakey introduces the song with incandescent fury, then is joined by his colleagues for the brisk theme treatment. Dorham takes off first, breathing fire from his horn with just Blakey and Watkins, then Silver joins in as the trumpeter keeps his foot on the gas wailing intensely. Mobley breaks into a rapid trot next, taking charge with authority and a jubilant backbeat behind him. Silver follows with an invigorating performance that reaches its peak energized. Blakey continues the spontaneous combustion he began during the introduction with a volcanic postscript on the final solo into the blazing coda.

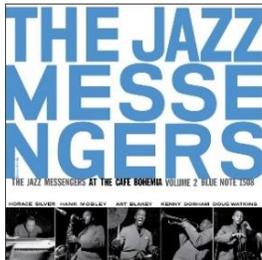
Kenny's Minor's Holiday starts the second side maintaining the upbeat flavor of The Theme. This tune opens with a vigorously brisk introduction by Art that segues into the quintet's sizzling melody. Kenny opens with a lightning-fast interpretation that infuses a few notes of Sing, Sing, Sing as he moves through each chorus at a voracious pace. Mobley meets the challenge with an exhilarating performance that's a knockout, followed by Silver who moves swiftly on the next interpretation with luminous intensity. The trumpeter exchanges a few heated riffs with Art who provides his own fireworks with extreme force leading back to the speedy theme and lively climax.

Alone Together was written by Arthur Schwartz and Howard Dietz in 1932; first appearing in the Broadway musical, Flying Colors, premiering that year. This beautiful ballad is one of the most recorded standards in The Great American Songbook and is a much-loved song among jazz and pop musicians and vocalists. Hank introduces the tune to the audience, then begins the penetrating melody with provocative suggestions of delicacy and tenderness that continue on the song's elegant solo performance. The trio showcases poignant and subtle groundwork for Mobley's affectionately graceful interpretation, ending with a deeply moving reprise and close. Prince Albert by Kenny Dorham and drummer Max Roach brings the first volume to a close with a collective carefree groove by the ensemble. Kenny opens with a captivating first solo that's highly effective and one of the set's high points. Hank's just as solid on the next reading with easy flowing flights of imagination that are performed exceptionally well. Lastly, both horns joust with Art; each man contributing a brief conversation that's satisfying in every respect before they arrive at a very satisfying conclusion.



The man behind the dials on this record and its companion is the legendary engineer, Rudy Van Gelder, and fans who weren't fortunate to be there in person at The Café Bohemia that night are in for a treat. The album has a superb recorded sound and the remastering by King Record Company delivers an exceptional soundstage; transforming the listener to the club with all the intimacy and ambiance heard at some of the best jazz venues in New York City. The Jazz Messengers at The Café Bohemia, Volume 1 is an album of remarkable performances by the quintet that acknowledges this was a great night. The soloing on each track is inspired and this quintet represents Hard-Bop at its best, making this one well worth listening to for an addition to your LP library.

Alone Together – Source: JazzStandards.com, Wikipedia.org



The Jazz Messengers – The Jazz Messengers at The Café Bohemia, Volume 2  
Blue Note – King Record Company

This second selection from the library submitted for your consideration is The Jazz Messengers at The Café Bohemia, Volume 2 (Blue Note BLP-1508) chronicling the second set at the celebrated jazz club featuring Kenny Dorham on trumpet; Hank Mobley on tenor sax; Horace Silver on piano; Doug Watkins on bass and Art Blakey on drums. My copy used in this report is the 1978 King Record Company Limited Japanese Mono reissue (Blue Note GXK 8103 (M) – BLP 1508). As he did to open, Volume 1, Art welcomes the crowd to the second set, inviting anyone who came in late to get comfortable and have a ball with the band. The opening selection is Sportin' Crowd, a Mobley original that gets underway on an explosive introduction by Blakey and the rhythm section. Kenny and Hank come in to complete the vivacious theme with a palpable presence that's infectious. Dorham exemplifies his flawless chops on a fleeting first solo that's on fire. Mobley takes his turn next, driving the trio's fast-paced accompaniment with a scintillating

statement demonstrating his versatility and virtuosity. Silver follows with a blistering performance producing lots of flames and Blakey brings the solos to a close with a dazzling dynamo of energy preceding the rapid closing coda.

Like Someone In Love by Jimmy Van Heusen and Johnny Burke was written in 1944, making its debut in the film Belle of The Yukon, also released that year. Blakey would record this jazz standard a second time in 1960, but it wouldn't be released until 1967 as the title tune of the Blue Note album (BLP 4245/BST 84245). The Messengers pay homage to this old favorite beginning with a blissfully happy melody presentation. Kenny starts lightly with some nice easy blowing on the lead solo. Hank responds with a perfectly constructed reading that's remarkably fluent, then Horace ends jamming in a loose-fitting, casual style ahead of the melody's reprise, finale and appreciative applause from the crowd. Yesterdays, the beautiful ballad by Jerome Kern and Otto Harbach was written in 1933; first appearing the Broadway musical, Roberta that year, and again in the 1935 film. It's been recorded frequently over the past eight decades since its inaugural performance and is a timeless jazz and pop classic. Art turns the microphone over to Kenny who introduces the tune and is the song's only soloist. The trumpeter gives a sensuously gentle performance and the rhythm section compliments him with voluptuous groundwork into a tranquil summation.

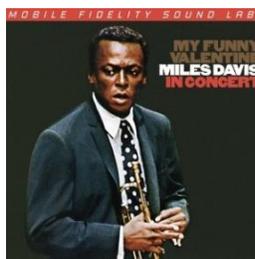
Avila and Tequila, the second Mobley tune picks up the pace again with an uptempo beat; it made its debut on the 1955 ten-inch Blue Note album, Hank Mobley Quartet (BLP 5066). Art brings the song to life with a lively, lengthy percussive introduction, followed by the quintet's Latin flavored theme that delivers a daunting impact. The composer launches into a searing solo of propelling force, followed by Dorham who keeps the fire burning with a fiercely aggressive performance. Silver cooks along boppishly on the next reading with uninhibited passion fueling Watkins and Blakey's accompaniment into a vibrantly swinging climax. Art gives the final solo with a formidable presentation that moves like mad with his Messengers leading to a swift finale. The album closes with the 1946 ballad, I Waited For You by Dizzy Gillespie and arranger, conductor Gil Fuller. Gillespie first recorded it in 1946 with his orchestra for RCA Victor. It's one of the few jazz standards that has a very pretty melody and has remained fresh because of not being over recorded. The song opens with a discreetly seductive introduction by Mobley and an equally luxurious



presentation of the nostalgic melody by Dorham. Kenny's opening statement is deeply lyrical and profoundly beautiful. Hank brings out the song's expressive beauty on the next presentation and Horace's elegant interpretation on the album's final solo caresses each note with a subtly sincerity ending with a subdued climax and slow fade as the quintet reprises Dorham's theme.

Originally recorded by Rudy Van Gelder, the analog Mono transfer by King Record Company from his original tapes has been beautifully remastered and the sound throughout Volume 2 is spectacular. Here then, is an enjoyable listening experience by The Jazz Messengers which like its companion, contains some of the best in Hard-Bop. Whether you're a novice or seasoned jazz fan, The Jazz Messengers at Café Bohemia, Volume 2 is an album, I would recommend anyone audition and is a title you certainly worth checking out! There is a third volume of The Jazz Messengers at The Café Bohemia on LP that includes six tracks not heard on either of the original albums but was only released in Japan in 1983 and not given an official catalog number until 1984 (BNJ 61007). The additional tracks are Lady Bird by Tadd Dameron; What's New? By Bob Haggart and Johnny Burke; two originals by Mobley, Deciphering The Message and Hank's Symphony; Just One of Those Things by Cole Porter, and Gone With The Wind by Allie Wrubel, and Herb Magidson.

Like Someone In Love, I Waited For You – Source: JazzStandards.com



Miles Davis – My Funny Valentine  
Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab

The next candidate up for discussion comes from “the man with the horn”, Miles Davis and is taken from the first half of a night of Jazz he performed to promote a very important cause. On February 12, 1964, his quintet of George Coleman on tenor sax; Herbie Hancock on piano; Ron Carter on bass and Tony

Williams on drums played at a benefit for the registration of black voters in Louisiana and Mississippi at Lincoln Center's Philharmonic Hall (now David Geffen Hall) in New York City. The concert was sponsored by the NAACP Defense Fund; the Congress for Racial Equality and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, yielding two incredible albums, 'Four' & More (Columbia CL 2453/CS 9253); released in 1966 and My Funny Valentine (Columbia CL2306/CS 9106); released in 1965. The show broke several records for a benefit performance at the time with the ticket prices reaching as high as \$25 and \$50 and was Standing Room Only. It also emphasized Miles' solidarity with the organizations and people who were fighting racism in the south. He decided that neither he nor the members of his quintet would accept payment for their appearance making for a tense situation that angered his bandmates before the group went on stage. His firmness in making this choice ultimately resulted in solos that are blazingly sharp and vigorously inspired on both albums. My copy used for this report is the 2016 Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab Stereo Limited Edition Audiophile reissue (MFSL 1-431).

A gracefully moving piano introduction by Herbie Hancock opens the album and the title tune, My Funny Valentine, written by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart for the 1937 musical comedy, Babes in Arms. This ageless favorite has been recorded by over six-hundred artists over the last eight decades; it appeared on over thirteen-hundred albums in several music genres and is an undisputed masterpiece that's worth the price of the album on its own accord. Miles' opening statement after his heartrending introduction of the melody is a palette of delicacy and elegiac quality that's one of the most haunting solos he ever recorded. He would later attribute his sound during this concert reflected his deeply personal reaction to President Kennedy's death, the previous November. Coleman though underrated as an effective complement to Miles' trumpet delivers a lyrically fluent solo that's interpreted here to its fullest satisfaction. Hancock presents the closing statement elegantly with an alluringly gentle interpretation. Carter and Williams provide an exquisite foundation that's a dazzling testament to their extraordinary appreciation for the lyrics.

The quintet moves to midtempo for the next selection, All of You, by Cole Porter from the 1954 Broadway musical and 1957 film, Silk Stockings. Miles opens the solos on muted trumpet delivering his point of view in a



thoughtfully studious reading that's technically flawless. George takes the spotlight next, blissfully sailing over the rhythm section's stellar supplement on a marvelous performance that's extremely satisfying. Herbie follows with an emotional message for the third reading that's one of the most beautiful moments on the album. Miles returns for a few more invigorating statements leading to a subtle finale with appreciative applause from the audience. Stella By Starlight starts the second side and was composed for the 1944 film, The Uninvited by Victor Young and Ned Washington who added lyrics two years later in 1946. This romantic ballad was used as the main title song during the opening credits and is heard throughout the film as the mystery unfolds.

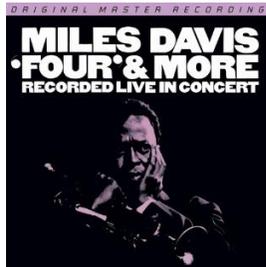
Stella By Starlight is also one of the most popular standards ever sung or played by some of the greatest artists in the annals of jazz. Herbie opens the song with a poignant introduction on the piano that's lovingly picturesque. Miles joins him, playing the melody with just Carter accompanying, then the entire ensemble who takes the song upward with their energizing interplay. Davis brings forth each tender-hearted emotion of this ageless chestnut with an opening statement that's one of his most personal, introspective offerings. Coleman is equally inspired on the next solo exhibiting thoughtful execution and efficient pacing culminating with a quiet contemplative tone. Hancock shows abundant evidence of why he would become an NEA Jazz Master, Kennedy Center Honoree and Grammy Award winner in the years ahead with a short, passionate reading characterized by its beautiful clarity, incredible emotion, and gentle feeling. Miles ends the song with a stunning display of romantic lyricism over the gently expressed accompaniment of the trio into a lovely climax.

The lone up-tempo track on the album is Miles' All Blues, first heard on his iconic 1959 Modal masterpiece, Kind of Blue (Columbia CL 1355/CS 8163). With a rapid snap of the leader's fingers, Ron and Herbie start this scintillating rendition, joined by George, Tony, and Miles who give an expedient muted melody. Removing the mute for the lead solo, Miles attacks each verse ferociously, propelled by the trio's high-octane groundwork fueled by the thunderous rhythm of Tony's drums. Herbie applies limitless energy to the second reading with intensely enthusiastic verses, then George concludes with zealous exhilaration on the final statement ahead of Davis' radiant muted reprise and Coleman's tenacious tenor into the silky smooth finale. The closer is I

Thought About You, written in 1939 by Jimmy Van Heusen and Johnny Mercer. Miles makes the introduction and with the trio creates a gracefully lush theme treatment; he then moves to midtempo on the first statement with a rhythmic swing that's lightly executed. George responds with textbook timing, articulation, and phrasing that's absolutely stunning. Herbie gives a brief, but expressive performance of sublime beauty next, and Ron tells the song's next sentimental story illustrating his depth, and range as one of the eminent masters on the acoustic bass. Miles returns to play some of the sweetest sounds for the closing ensemble marking the climax of this LP and one of the most outstanding performances he would ever give in front of an audience.

In May 2016 to honor what would have been Miles Davis' ninetieth birthday, I wrote a review of My Funny Valentine using my 1983 CBS-Sony Japanese Stereo reissue (23AP 2562). The sound of that LP is impressive with a solid soundstage and each of the instruments coming through clearly defined. The Mobile Fidelity's GAIN 2 Ultra Analog 180g Series takes the remastering of the original album to an entirely different level with an extraordinary sound and incredible definition throughout the highs, midrange, and bass that's absolutely sensational. From the first notes of the title tune, Miles and his quintet bring together a musical experience not to be missed that expresses the sheer joy of spirited music-making. To those fans who are new to Jazz or only know of Miles' later fusion and contemporary periods. I invite you to consider the MOFI Stereo reissue My Funny Valentine and its companion, 'Four' & More (my final report of 2019) among the purchases to put on your shopping list. The playing is dynamic; the music, lovingly presented; and both LPs take you back in time, placing you in the center of the tenth row in Philharmonic Hall to enjoy a definitive performance by The Miles Davis Quintet!

My Funny Valentine, All of You, Stella By Starlight, All Blues, I Thought About You – Source: JazzStandards.com



Miles Davis – 'Four' & More  
Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab

My final album for 2019 is the live companion to My Funny Valentine, 'Four' & More (Columbia CL 2453/CS 9253); originally released in 1966. Both albums document a benefit concert The Miles Davis Quintet performed for the registration of black voters in Louisiana and Mississippi at Philharmonic Hall on February 12, 1964. The sold-out concert was sponsored by the NAACP Defense Fund, the Congress for Racial Equality and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. It also emphasized Miles' solidarity with all three organizations and the people who were fighting racism in the south. He made the decision to not accept payment for himself and his quintet's performance that not only angered his colleagues before the group went on stage but ultimately resulted in solos that can only be described as volcanic eruptions. His quintet consisted of four giants of their respected instruments, George Coleman on tenor sax; Herbie Hancock on piano; Ron Carter on bass and Tony Williams on drums. My copy used in this report is the 2013 Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab Stereo Limited Edition Audiophile Reissue (MFSL 1-376)!

The first side opens with an explosively fast rendition of Miles' signature song, So What taken at a volatile tempo for the theme. This jazz standard was introduced on the 1959 iconic album, Kind of Blue (Columbia CL 1355/CS 8163). Miles starts the soloing with a blazing performance that leaves smoldering embers in its wake; George comes right on his heels maintaining the breakneck speed with an incandescent reading. Herbie takes over next for the third supersonic interpretation with Ron and Tony providing the propulsive power behind each soloist with enough electricity to power a small city. Miles returns to lead the group into the exhilarating closing chorus and a soft climax that receives resounding applause from the audience. There's only a second to breathe because the quintet soars into the stratosphere on the next tune,

Walkin' by Richard Carpenter. This jazz and pop standard made its first appearance on the 1957 Prestige album, Miles Davis All-Stars (PRLP 7076). An expedient introduction by Miles segues into a blistering opening chorus by the ensemble. Davis takes the reins first, turning each verse of the lead solo into a wild ride at a dangerously rapid speed. Tony translates his feelings into action with an excitingly fierce performance. George supplies the third presentation with exhilarating vitality, then Herbie swings with a zesty interpretation bristling with energy and vigorous exertion of power leading to the quintet's end theme and climax.

Joshua by Victor Feldman was first heard on Davis' 1963 album, Seven Steps To Heaven (CL 2051/CS 8851) starts with a heated theme treatment by the quintet. Miles is up first with an opening statement of searing emotion featuring him repeating a few bars from his So What solo. George provides the high-octane fuel that turns up the heat on the second reading, then Herbie's fingers are glowing hot with feisty agility on the final performance preceding the speedy ending theme and coda. Go-Go, Miles' theme wraps up the first side with Master of Ceremonies, Mort Fega addressing the crowd and reintroducing the quintet's members while they swing aggressively into the closing chorus accompanied by the audience's approving ovation. Four, a Davis original opens Side Two and debuted on the 1954 ten-inch LP, Miles Davis Quartet (Prestige PRLP-161). Tony's electrifying brushwork introduces the song with the ensemble working collectively on the very speedy melody. Miles opens the solos swiftly with elaborately constructed verses of upbeat spontaneity, then George takes over for a compelling interpretation possessing the power of a lightning strike. Herbie is up next with a dazzling array of fireworks beaming and glowing with high-intensity. Tony makes a brief, blazing comment ahead of the group's theme reprise that ends leisurely.

Seven Steps To Heaven by Davis and Victor Feldman is the title tune of Miles' 1963 album; beginning with a concise introduction by the rhythm section that blossoms into an expeditiously fast melody. The leader's off and running on the first solo with the rapid velocity of the Eurostar Bullet Train. Williams' superb artistry and skillfulness are shown to uncompromising advantage on the second hard-hitting presentation. Coleman delivers a torrid performance next with renewed vigor followed by the pianist who crafts a stellar performance that makes its presence felt with a barrage of passionate emotion leading to the



ensemble's closing chorus and climax. The finale is a jazz standard from The Great American Songbook. There Is No Greater Love was written in 1936 by Isham Jones and Marty Symes. It's normally played or sung at a ballad tempo, but the quintet opens the song at a medium beat with the leader on the muted horn leading the rhythm section through the opening melody. Miles' airy, articulate tone on the muted horn still manages to swing at a lower temperature with a soulfully structured statement where a portion of his performance features Ron as his only accompanist. George swings with such feeling on the next interpretation, he communicates his tuneful ideas in a marvelous solo that also features Ron backing him prominently. Herbie is equally comfortable on the final performance, strolling along with a charmingly, cheerful statement before the ensemble takes the song out. Go-Go sends the crowd home happy with Miles stating the melody with the mute on, then going open horn as Mr. Fega makes the closing remarks acknowledging the members a final time.

The original recording was produced by Teo Macero and Kreig Wunderlich of Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab provided the remastering of the original Stereo tapes. I never knew how really great the MOFI LP reissues were until I got a copy of the long out of print 1982 Stereo album, Bumpin' by Wes Montgomery (MFSL 1-508). The sound quality of that album is spectacular for a studio session and I hope to discuss it in an upcoming report. 'Four' & More and My Funny Valentine are in the same vein with both LP's possessing an extraordinary "live" presence that places you in the audience at Philharmonic Hall. I was also very impressed with the sound of the recorded instruments; the stereo separation is mesmerizing. Miles is on both speakers; Herbie is on the left; George, Ron, and Tony are on the right. In short, both albums have startling fidelity and the culmination is an astonishing musical presentation. If you're a fan of Miles Davis' early sixties recordings or looking to complete your collection of music by him, I submit for your approval, 'Four' & More and My Funny Valentine (MFSL 1-431) for a spot in your jazz library. Both are two reissues I highly recommend for any jazzophile's record library!

Seven Steps To Heaven, Kind of Blue, Miles Davis All-Stars, Miles Davis Quartet, Teo Macero, Kreig Wunderlich – Source: Discogs.com

There Is No Greater Love – Source: JazzStandards.com, Wikipedia.org

Happy Holidays, and Happy New Year everyone from my home and heart to yours. May all your gifts run at 33 1/3 or 45-rpms with lots of Happy Listening ahead. I thank you all so much for the privilege and pleasure of my second year of writing these columns, and I look forward to sharing the pleasure of your company as I begin year three of Jazztracks in 2020!