

Jimmy Smith – Crazy! Baby
Blue Note

The Incredible Jimmy Smith steps into the spotlight to begin July with his first album of the sixties and fifteenth of his career. *Crazy! Baby* (Blue Note BLP 4030) is a trio album featuring the organist's bandmates, Quentin Warren on guitar, and Donald Bailey on drums. My copy used in this report is the 1966 Liberty Records Stereo reissue (BST 84030). When *Johnny Comes Marching Home*, the album opener has been around since 1863 and the Civil War. I first heard the 45-rpm single of this song in 1962 and was blown away by the trio's solid musicianship on the marching melody. Quentin is up first for an opening solo that goes down smoothly and easily like chilled Chardonnay. Jimmy follows with one of his meatiest solos on the album, nearly five-minutes of electrifying jazz preceding the threesome's closing march and vanishing fade. *Makin' Whoopee* by Gus Kahn and Walter Donaldson premiered in the 1928 Broadway musical, *Whoopee!* The trio eases into the nostalgic opening chorus in unison. Smith, the lone soloist creates a marvelous interpretation with a stunning bass line using his left foot before the coda.

A Night In Tunisia by Dizzy Gillespie and Frank Paparelli was first sung as a vocal by Sarah Vaughan under the title *Interlude* on the 1950 album, *Hot Jazz*. This 1942 jazz standard is one of Gillespie's most recorded tunes and the trio establishes the opening chorus originally performed by Dizzy. Jimmy begins the first solo with an infectious performance, then Quentin closes with a funky statement with Donald's rocking timekeeping propelling the trio into a thrilling climax. *Sonny Moon For Two* is by tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins and the composer introduced it on the 1957 album, *A Night at The Village Vanguard*. The group begins this tune with a bluesy melody preceding Warren who dances and grooves for two verses. Jimmy comes in next for some extensive wailing before the reprise and fadeout. *Mack The Knife* by Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht made its debut in the 1928 German

play, *The Threepenny Opera*. This popular standard is a showcase for the leader who does a splendid job emphasizing the song's mood preceding the closing chorus that dissolves softly.

Up next is the beautiful 1939 ballad by Bob Haggart and Johnny Burke, *What's New?* Smith starts with a delicately wistful melody, then gives a pensive one-sided interpretation reflecting on the love that's now just a memory before ending his conversation in impressively grand fashion. The album closes with Smith's dedication to Blue Note co-founder Alfred Lion, Alfredo. The trio begins the melody jointly ahead of Quentin soloing first with a leisurely, lighthearted swing that'll get fingers snapping and toes tapping. Jimmy raises the temperature on a vigorous closing reading taking no prisoners leading to the coda. Rudy Van Gelder's recording is well done with an exquisite soundstage resulting in sweet sounds emerging from your speakers that make this LP an easy choice to recommend for a spot in your library. If you're a fan of jazz organ or are just discovering the music of Jimmy Smith, I submit for your consideration, *Crazy! Baby*. It's a tasty combination of Hard-Bop and Soul-Jazz that once heard, you'll want to replay repeatedly!

A Night at The Village Vanguard (Blue Note BLP 1581/BST 81581); *Hot Jazz* (Remington RLP-1024) – Source: Discogs.com

A Night In Tunisia, *Mack The Knife*, *Makin' Whoopee*, *What's New?* – Source: JazzStandards.com

When Johnny Comes Marching Home – Source: Wikipedia.org



Kirk Lightsey Trio – Isotope
Criss Cross Jazz

I'm a huge fan of jazz piano, so I was delighted to be introduced to The Kirk Lightsey Trio recently. I first heard him on the 1987 album *Heads Up* by David Newman and recently acquired a copy of this next



record to discuss. *Isotope* (Criss Cross Jazz 1003) is a marvelous session featuring Lightsey on piano, Jesper Lundgaard on bass, and Eddie Gladden on drums. My copy used in this report is the original 1983 Netherlands Stereo release. The title tune was written by Joe Henderson who recorded it on the 1965 album, *Inner Urge*. It kicks off Side One with a sprightly collective theme, then Kirk crackles with excitement on the opening statement. Jesper gives a spirited performance as bright and sunny as a hot summer day next. Kirk presents a few final lines before closing on a vivacious note. *Oleo* by Sonny Rollins premiered on the 1954 album, *Bags Groove* by Miles Davis. Lightsey starts this swift swinger with a brief intro of the melody segueing into a breakneck main theme and first solo. Lundgaard delivers some ferociously spirited bass lines next and Gladden makes a prominent comment before the close.

Pee Wee is a very pretty tune by Tony Williams that was first heard on the 1988 album, *Angel Street*. The trio's rendition opens with an affectionately warm melody. Kirk's opening and closing chorus is exceptionally tender and intimately sincere. Jesper follows with a gentle reading of serene beauty in-between the leader's statements with Eddie's compassionate brushwork backing both soloists into a lovely finale. *Witch Hunt* by Wayne Shorter was first heard on the saxophonist's 1966 album, *Speak No Evil*. The trio swings into the main theme with remarkable ease and Lightsey shapes the first solo with effortless spontaneity. Lundgaard walks his bass with a delightful, laid-back bounce that's perfectly easy and natural before the pianist makes a final comment ahead of the closing chorus. *A Monk's Dream* was written by Johnny Griffin and originally recorded on the 1979 album, *Return of The Griffin*. The ensemble opens with a very friendly melody and Kirk infuses the song's only solo with an insightful performance that's passionate and rewarding.

Little Daphne is by Rudolph Johnson and made its debut on the composer's 1971 record, *Spring Rain*. It ends the date with a lovely, charming rendition by the trio opening with a gorgeous melody. Lightsey establishes a vivacious momentum on the opening solo with an expertly crafted performance. Lundgaard takes the next turn for an eloquent reading that's vividly expressive and the leader adds the finishing touches on a brief reprise preceding the coda. *Isotope* was produced by Criss Cross Jazz founder Gerry Teekens and engineered by the owner of Studio 44, Max Bolleman. The sound of the album is superb with an

exquisite soundstage amid the highs, midrange, and low-end that's a sonic treat I'm sure you'll enjoy. Kirk Lightsey has eighteen albums under his leadership and twenty-eight as a sideman. If you've not yet heard him and are looking for a trio jazz album for a spot in your library, I offer for your consideration *Isotope* by The Kirk Lightsey Trio. In my opinion, it's a perfect choice to begin your day or end your evening of listening with a smile!

Angel Street (Blue Note B1-48494); *Bags Groove* (Prestige 7109); *Inner Urge* (Blue Note BLP 4189/BST 84189); *Return of The Griffin* (Galaxy GXY-5117); *Speak No Evil* (Blue Note BLP 4194/BST 84194); *Spring Rain* (Black Jazz Records BJ 4) – Source: Discogs.com

Oleo – Source: JazzStandards.com



Gene Ammons – *Jammin' In Hi-Fi With Gene Ammons*
Prestige Original Jazz Classics

Submitted for your consideration this time is a 1957 session led by tenor saxophonist Gene Ammons that's one of the fine jam sessions Prestige released in the late fifties. *Jammin' In Hi-Fi With Gene Ammons* (Prestige 7110) brings the saxman together with a world-class sextet of musicians who would become leaders themselves and create some of the best music known as Hard-Bop. Idrees Sulieman on trumpet; Jackie McLean on alto sax; Kenny Burrell on guitar; Mal Waldron on piano; Paul Chambers on bass and Art Taylor on drums. My copy used in this report is the 1984 Mono reissue (Prestige Original Jazz Classics OJC-129 – P-7110). The album opener is the first of two originals by pianist Mal Waldron, *The Twister* comes at you at medium speed, swinging from the opening notes of the septet's melody. Gene leads off the solos cruising at a comfortable speed with plenty of imagination in each verse of the opening statement utilizing a few excerpts from *Kerry Dance*, *Moose The Mooche*, and *52nd Street Theme*. Idrees follows with a bluesy reading stamped with a down-home, soulful



flavor. Jackie takes the next solo enthusiastically building a series of foot-tapping excitement in each verse, then Kenny takes over making his presence felt on the next interpretation with a fine solo performance. Mal follows with a blues-rooted groove that flows smoothly. Paul solos impressively on a brief reading leading to an exchange of riffs between all three horns and Kenny into the ensemble's closing coda.

Four by Miles Davis was written in 1954, making its first appearance on the ten-inch album, Miles Davis Quartet released that year. The septet's version of the jazz standard takes an unusual journey after the collective theme treatment. Sulieman, Ammons, McLean, and Burrell take two choruses each in that order, then one chorus apiece twice, followed by a half-chorus each. Walton skillfully constructs three verses for a concise interpretation that are paced leisurely but stated explicitly. Taylor exchanges with the front line before the septet returns for the ending theme. The 1936 popular song Pennies From Heaven by Arthur Johnston and Johnny Burke opens the second side. It serves as the title song for the film that year and starts with a slow-tempo duet between Gene and Kenny that expands into a pleasant midtempo melody. Ammons displays a powerfully rich sound on the opening statement, followed by Burrell who swings easily into a relaxing reading. McLean also weaves a sweet-toned delivery on the next solo. Sulieman delivers a soulful performance next on the muted horn, and Waldron explores some intriguing ideas on the closer preceding the tranquil climax.

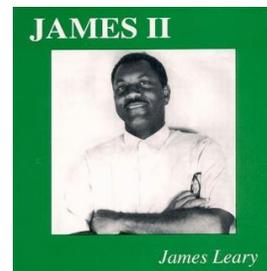
The album closer is the second Waldron original, Cattin', a funky blues that opens with a solo introduction by Paul that evolves into the septet's opening chorus. Gene sets the tone first with a neatly paced stroll through the lead solo, then Kenny turns in a splendid performance. Idrees delivers a statement of informal casualness on the next solo, then Jackie gets your fingers popping and toes tapping with a soulful groove. Mal responds with a light, breezy interpretation of tasteful simplicity ahead of the septet's return for the finale. Fantasy has done an excellent job with the remastering of Mr. Van Gelder's original recording. The album has an excellent soundstage with no harshness during the highs, midrange, and low end with the septet coming through your speakers as if they're in your listening room. Jammin' In Hi-Fi With Gene Ammons is a very pleasant, fun, and enjoyable LP that I'm sure will make a fine addition to any fan's library who's a fan of the jam session. In 1960, and

1964 for the second and third reissues, the album's title was changed to The Twister!

Four, Miles Davis Quartet (Prestige PRLP-161); The Twister (Prestige PR-7176) – Source: Discogs.com

Kerry Dance, Moose The Mooche, 52nd Street Theme – Source: Album liner notes by Ira Gitler

Pennies From Heaven – Source: Wikipedia.org



James Leary – James II
VTL-The Vital Sound

This month's final column begins with the second album by James Leary on David Manley's audiophile record label VTL. James II (VTL-The Vital Sound 005) is a stellar 1992 quartet session released a year after his first album for Vital Records, James. The personnel for this two-record set is Eddie Harris on tenor sax (tracks: A2, C1, D1, D2), and vocals (track: B1); Billy Childs on acoustic piano; Leary on acoustic bass and Ralph Penland on drums. My copy used in this report is the original Stereo release. The album gets underway with the opening number, Joshua. This is a Victor Feldman composition originally made famous by Miles Davis on Seven Steps To Heaven (1963) and two live albums, Miles Davis In Europe (1964) and 'Four' & More (1966). Billy kicks off the album with a breathtaking melody, then rips into the opening solo with searing intensity. James follows with a fascinating study of vivacity and sprightliness, then Ralph executes a brief finale of impeccable brushwork before the coda.

Have You Met Miss Jones? The popular standard by Richard Rodgers & Lorenz Hart first appeared in the 1937 musical comedy, I'd Rather Be Right. Eddie Harris makes his debut here and the quartet takes the melody at a relaxed beat. Billy picks up the pace on the opening solo with a compelling improvisation. Eddie's first reading finds full rein of expression with a full-bodied tone you can't help but enjoy. James puts



together a very effective closing statement ahead of the ending theme. A Flower Is a Lovesome Thing by Billy Strayhorn was composed in 1944. It opens Side Two with a hauntingly delicate introduction to the melody by the quartet utilizing Harris' voice scatting along with the trio. Leary tells a deeply poignant story on the lead solo that's a reminder of the passing of time. Childs delivers the second statement with the sweetness of a scented summer breeze after a light rain. Harris makes the final reading his own with a sublimed moody feeling that floats gently into the climax.

Seven Steps To Heaven by Miles Davis and Victor Feldman brings Record One to a close with a brief unaccompanied introduction by the bassist segueing into an invigorating theme. Leary swings from the outset on the first statement, then Childs gives an energetic workout next. Penland speaks last with a fierce intensity leading to an exuberant closing chorus. John Coltrane's Spiral creates an infectious midtempo melody from the opening notes of the introduction into a swinging first interpretation by Eddie. Billy brings his own brand of excitement to the second reading and James provides some good cooking on the finale. Leary's Laugh, Laugh Again is a trio performance beginning with a bowed introduction by the bassist preceding the lovely opening chorus. Childs starts the first reading tenderly, revealing the essence of the song with a delicate interpretation that's rich and atmospheric. Leary wraps up the solos with a tender, sweet performance.

Oleo by Sonny Rollins begins the final side with Leary providing a repeating bass figure reoccurring underneath each reading. Billy starts with a muscular groove that really cooks, then Eddie swings with an exciting restlessness on the second statement. James follows with a scintillating solo and Ralph ends in fine form on a dynamically propulsive presentation. Leary's Hold My Hand is a simple ballad that opens elegantly with Harris in front of the foursome on the lyrically beautiful theme. The first solo is affectionately handled by Harris who gives a presentation of intimate lyricism. Childs wraps up the album with a thoughtfully delicate reading. David Manley, VTL's (Vacuum Tube Logic of America) founder produced and engineered this album in a state-of-the-art studio utilizing the company's tube technology. The soundstage is extraordinary throughout the highs, midrange, and bass. The result is James II by James Leary is not just an excellent album, but a treat for any jazz fan to enjoy! Please continue to stay safe and take care of yourselves

during the Coronavirus pandemic. I'll see you next month and Happy Listening Gang!

'Four' & More (Columbia CL 2453/CS 9253); James (Vital Records ViTaL 003); Miles Davis In Europe (Columbia CL 2183/CS 8983); Seven Steps To Heaven (Columbia CL 2051/CS 8851) – Source: Discogs.com

Oleo, Have You Met Miss Jones? – Source: JazzStandards.com

Seven Steps To Heaven – Wikipedia.org