

The Jazz Crusaders – The Festival Album
Pacific Jazz

Up next from the library to begin June is a 1966 live album by four friends from Houston, Texas who began performing locally in 1956. After moving to Los Angeles in 1961, they would become The Jazz Crusaders, one of the best jazz groups from the West Coast. I became a fan of their music in 1962 from listening to Chuck Lansing of Cleveland's jazz station, WCUY 92.3 FM. His opening theme was The Young Rabbits, taken from their second LP, Lookin' Ahead. The Festival Album (Pacific Jazz ST-20115) contains two performances each from The Pacific Jazz Festival and The Newport Jazz Festival. The quartet consists of Wayne Henderson on trombone; Wilton Felder on tenor sax; Joe Sample on piano and Stix Hooper on drums. Jimmy Bond (tracks: A1, A2) and Herbie Lewis (tracks: B1, B2) are on bass, rounding out the group, and my copy used in this report is the 1967 Stereo LP.

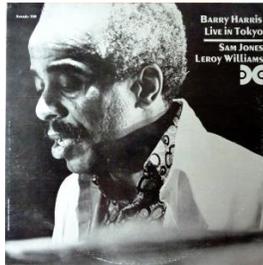
Trance Dance by pianist Kenny Cox kicks off the first side with the ensemble's soulful theme treatment. Wayne starts the solos with a relaxing informality. Wilton is also especially impressive on the second reading. Joe steps into a gorgeous closing statement leading to the quintet's reprise and ending. A Summer Madness is the collaborative creation of Sample, Henderson, and Felder. The trombonist leads the quintet through the midtempo melody, then impresses with a passionate performance on the first statement. Wilton is up next with inspired lines that are equally intelligent and satisfying. Joe follows with a mellow tone that unfolds smoothly and Jimmy makes a brief remark preceding the finale and crowd's ovation. Side Two opens with Henderson's Young Rabbits and is off to the races from the intensely hot notes of the melody. Felder takes the first solo at breakneck speed with each note full of fire. Sample steps up next for a high-octane performance of unmistakable energy and Stix closes the solos with an energetic interpretation into the ensemble's vigorous reprise and close.

The finale is Sample's Freedom Sound that served as the title tune of their 1961 debut album. The trio starts this midtempo swinger with a march-like introduction developing into the quintet's collective theme treatment. Felder takes the lead on this tune with a bluesy interpretation that's stylish. Henderson says his piece next with a boppish flavor that's perfectly in step with the rhythm section. Joe takes the final solo with a well-constructed solo that swings comfortably powered by Herbie and Stix's excellent groundwork. This was The Jazz Crusaders' twelfth LP as a jazz ensemble. As AllMusic reviewer Thom Jarek states, "They were extremely popular and well known on the West Coast, but their first trip to The Newport Jazz Festival was significant because it introduced them to a whole new group of fans and brought them to the attention of clubs in the jazz capital, New York City".

My only issue is that I wish it would have been released as a two-record set with each LP dedicated to one festival. The album was produced by Richard Bock, who I'm guessing also supervised the recording of both performances because the sound quality of each session is quite good with an excellent soundstage through the treble, midrange, and bass. For those fans who only know of The Crusaders' music from the seventies and eighties, The Festival Album shows the group in excellent form on the live stage and gives a snapshot of the Hard-Bop, Post-Bop sound they created when Jazz was their middle name!

AllMusic Review by Thom Jarek – Source: AllMusic.com

Freedom Sound (Pacific Jazz PJ-27/ST-27); Lookin' Ahead (Pacific Jazz PJ-43/ST-43) – Source: Discogs.com



Barry Harris – Live In Tokyo
Xanadu Records

In April 1976, Xanadu Records recorded three live albums in Japan featuring an all-star quintet including alto saxophonist, Charles McPherson, and guitarist Jimmy Raney. The tapings resulted in Charles McPherson Live In Tokyo, Jimmy Raney Live In Tokyo, and this next choice from the library that was the first performance by pianist Barry Harris. Live In Tokyo (Xanadu 130) documents concerts at two locations, Yubin Chokin Hall and Nakano Sun Plaza with the ensemble's rhythm section featuring Sam Jones on bass and Leroy Williams on drums. It was Harris' second record for the label and my copy used in this report is the 1976 US Stereo release. The set opener, A Soft Spot is a lively tune from Barry's pen that leaves the ground and starts flying from the melody into a swinging solo of fire by the leader. Leroy follows with a stunning interpretation that's right on the mark leading to a vigorous finale. The trio slows the pace for Round Midnight, the timeless jazz standard by Bernie Hanighen, Thelonious Monk, and Cootie Williams. As the song's only soloist, Harris gives a stylishly, sensuous reading that's hauntingly moving, and stands up to other versions of Monk's most recorded tune.

Tea For Two by Vincent Youmans and Irving Caesar was written in 1924 and introduced in the Broadway musical, No, No, Nanette. Barry gives a nearly minute solo introduction before taking off on a full-speed run through the opening melody and first reading. Leroy engages in a vigorous exchange with Harris preceding the hard-hitting coda. Bud Powell's Dance of The Infidels is a midtempo swinger that closes the first side on an upbeat note and allows each member, solo space. Powell composed the song in 1949, and first recorded it for Blue Note Records. The trio takes a brisk approach to the tune with a splendid theme treatment. Harris kicks off the solos with a feisty opening statement possessing a carefree zest. Sam is up next with a short reading that hits its target like a sharpshooter. Barry shares the final solo with Leroy

who executes a passionate exchange before the closing chorus. I'll Remember April is a very pretty song by Gene De Paul, Patricia Johnston, and Don Raye. It was composed in 1941, making its debut in the 1942 comedy, Ride 'Em Cowboy. The group brings a little sunshine to this treasured tune with an easy beat on the main theme. Harris picks up the pace with a cheerful, effervescent first statement, then Jones swings softly on a passionate presentation. Barry and Williams make an indelible impression with a blissful resolution on the closing reading that arrives at a very gratifying conclusion.

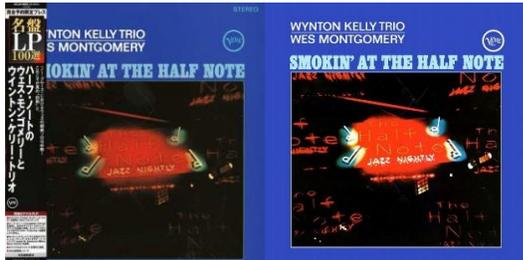
Barry takes a moment to make a sincere and heartfelt Dedication In Japanese to the crowd. He follows with a beautiful solo composition also devoted to the audience titled Fukai Aijoh which means Deep Love. Harris expresses personal feelings in an elegant interpretation of tenderness and subtle finesse into a delicately gentle ending. The final selection is the 1951 jazz standard, Un Poco Loco by Bud Powell beginning with a brisk theme treatment in unison leading to Barry's aggressive opening solo of astonishing ferocity. Leroy has the last word with a concise reading of compelling power before the pianist's vivacious out-chorus preceding a thunderous ovation by the concert crowd. This album and its two companions were produced by label founder Don Schlitten and recorded by Japanese sound engineer, Shinji Ohtsuka. Live In Tokyo is a sonic treat with an exceptional soundstage of the piano, bass, and drums, and though the LP length is just short of forty-three minutes, the listener will feel they've received their money's worth on the strength of the performances. Now that I've got this album, I'll be seeking the other two to add to my library. If you're a fan of piano jazz or trio jazz, I invite you to audition Live In Tokyo by pianist Barry Harris. It's a fun listen, and a title I'm sure you'll enjoy in your library!

Dance of The Infidels (Blue Note 362-1); Charles McPherson Live In Tokyo (Xanadu 131); Jimmy Raney Live In Tokyo (Xanadu 132) – Source: Discogs.com

I'll Remember April, Round Midnight, Tea For Two – Source: JazzStandards.com

Dance of The Infidels – Source: The Complete Bud Powell Blue Note Recordings (1949-1958) Mosaic Records (MR5-116)

Un Poco Loco – Source: Wikipedia.org



Wynton Kelly Trio & Wes Montgomery – Smokin' at The Half Note
Verve Records & Analogue Productions

What do you get when a live album recorded at one of the premier New York City jazz clubs features one of its greatest guitarists and the extraordinary rhythm section for The Miles Davis Quintet of the early sixties? The answer can be found on the 1965 album, *Smokin' at The Half Note* (Verve Records V-8633/V6-8633) by The Wynton Kelly Trio and Wes Montgomery. They first performed together on Montgomery's 1962 live album with tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin, Full House. Here, Wes teams up again with Wynton Kelly on piano; Paul Chambers on bass and Jimmy Cobb on drums for two live tracks at The Half Note and three at the Van Gelder Studio in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey. Several other tunes that could have been included were released posthumously on the 1969 album, *Willow Weep For Me*, more about that a little later. The LP's used in this report are my 2007 Verve Records 33 1/3 Japanese Stereo audiophile reissue (UCJU-8933) and the 2013 Analogue Productions 45-rpm US Stereo audiophile reissue (AP-8633). The song listing on record one of the 45-rpm album is (tracks: A1, A2, B1) and on record two (tracks: B2, B3).

Side One starts with a spirited version of Miles Davis' *No Blues* the trio performed in the memorable 1961 concert that was featured on the 1962 album, *Miles Davis at Carnegie Hall*. The quartet takes off on the cheerfully bright melody laying an impressive blueprint of what's to come. Wes is inspired on the lead solo, swinging as if he's sitting on his porch talking to friends. Wynton performs some ravishing work on the next reading and Paul delivers the final statement with an infectious bluesy feeling. *If You Could See Me Now*, the 1946 jazz standard by Tadd Dameron, and Carl Sigman was written especially for vocalist Sarah Vaughan, becoming one of her signature songs during her live concerts. The quartet opens with a cascading waterfall of enchanting beauty by Kelly on a lovely theme evolving into the seductive opening statement.

Montgomery makes the closing solo child's play with tasteful sensitivity into the quartet's provocative, pretty ending.

Side Two starts with Unit 7 by bassist Sam Jones who was a member of The Cannonball Adderley Quintet at the time. This contemporary classic first appeared on the 1961 album, *Nancy Wilson/Cannonball Adderley*, later becoming the group's theme song when they performed live. Kelly gets right to work on the opening statement with heated intensity. Wes follows, fanning the flames brightly on a vibrant interpretation before the foursome's energetic return for the finale. Montgomery's *Four on Six* gives everyone a chance to solo at an upbeat velocity with Wes in front of the melody. He continues cooking on the lead solo with enthusiastic vitality. Wynton tackles the second statement, giving a highly engaging interpretation. Paul expresses his point on the next reading with delightful pleasure, and Jimmy exchanges vigorous riffs with Wes and Wynton on the final performance leading to the closing chorus.

The album's final track is the gentle torch song by Bob Haggart and Johnny Burke, *What's New?* It was composed as an instrumental in 1938 under the title *I'm Free*. Haggart was a member of The Bob Crosby Orchestra and it was a showcase for bandmate, trumpeter Billy Butterfield who was the featured soloist! Burke wrote lyrics in 1939 and it was changed to the new title because it describes a one-sided conversation between former lovers as the words are sung. Kelly introduces the standard politely, then Wes takes over to lead the quartet on the delicately tender melody. Wynton gets the spotlight as the song's only soloist and delivers a deeply pensive performance that's dreamy with a touch of sadness. Wes reprises the melody expressing regret and remorseful feelings into a touching ending as the lovers go their separate ways after saying goodbye.

The only fault I have with *Smokin' at The Half Note* is it's not a completely live performance. Verve Records released four of the quartet's performances in 1969 on the album, *Willow Weep For Me* overdubbed with strings and brass woodwinds, arranged and conducted by Claus Ogerman. The title tune, *Portrait of Jennie*, *Oh, You Crazy Moon* and *Misty*, attempting to recapture Wes' earlier success with him on the 1966 album, *Tequila*. Though jazz critics denounced the label for this strategy, the record reached number twelve on the *Billboard Jazz Charts* and won the award as the *Best Jazz Instrumental Album for an Individual*



or Group at The 1970 Grammy Awards. Fans of the original LP would have to wait until the 1995 CD-album, Impressions: The Verve Jazz Sides to hear all eleven tracks recorded at The Half Note as they were originally performed.

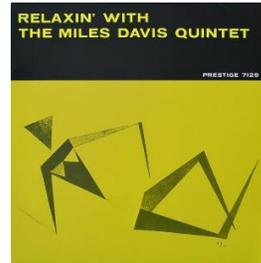
The sound quality of my 2007 33 1/3-rpm Japanese Stereo reissue is incredible delivering a crystal-clear sound throughout the highs, midrange, and low end, placing the listener in the jazz club and Van Gelder's studio with the musicians as they're performing. USM Japan did an excellent job of remastering the original tapes. The AP 45-rpm reissue, however, opened my ears way up with a phenomenal sound that's truly demonstration class for those of you who own high-end systems. George Marino of Sterling Sound was the mastering engineer and after doing a three-day A-B comparison, it's a night and day difference. That said, despite the issue of two songs performed live and three songs done in the studio, Smokin' at The Half Note by The Wynton Kelly Trio and Wes Montgomery is first-rate acoustic jazz of the highest quality that I'm happy to have in my LP library. If you're a fan of either musician, it should be considered seriously for yours!

Full House (Riverside RLP-434/RLP 9434); Impressions: The Verve Jazz Sides (Verve 314 521 690-2); Miles Davis at Carnegie Hall (Columbia CL 1812/CS 8612); Nancy Wilson/Cannonball Adderley (Capitol Records T1657/ST1657); Tequila (Verve Records V-8653/V6-8653); Willow Weep For Me (V6-8765) – Source: Discogs.com

If You Could See Me Now, What's New? – Source: JazzStandards.com

USM Japan is a division of Universal Music LLC.

Billy Butterfield, Sarah Vaughan, The Bob Crosby Orchestra – Source: Wikipedia.org



The Miles Davis Quintet – Relaxin' With The Miles Davis Quintet
Analogue Productions

It took only two days in 1956 for The Miles Davis Quintet to record four incredible jazz albums that have not only stood the test of time but are considered by many to be perfect examples of Hard-Bop at its best. All four LP's the ensemble recorded completed Davis' contractual obligation to Prestige before moving on to Columbia Records where he would make some of the most important music over the next thirty years. The albums are Cookin', released in 1957, Workin' in 1959, Steamin' in 1961, and this month's final title submitted for your approval, Relaxin' With The Miles Davis Quintet (Prestige PRLP-7129), released in 1958. The personnel is Miles on muted trumpet (tracks: A1 to A3, B1, B2), trumpet (track: B3); John Coltrane on tenor sax; Red Garland on piano; Paul Chambers on bass and Philly Joe Jones on drums. The copy used in this report is the 2013 Analogue Productions Mono audiophile reissue (APRJ 7129).

The album opens with If I Were a Bell composed by Frank Loesser from the 1950 Broadway musical Guys and Dolls. It became a jazz standard after Miles' rendition on Relaxin' and would become a signature song during the quintet's live performances. The trumpeter comments the band, then several snaps of his fingers bring the tune to life. The quintet begins the medium melody with Miles leading on the muted horn, then continuing on the first solo cruising along at an easy speed. John steps in next for some smooth sailing and Red ends with an exciting performance that swings masterfully ahead of the leader's closing chorus into the subtle summation. You're My Everything is by Harry Warren, Mort Dixon, and Joe Young. This song made its debut in the 1931 Broadway show, The Laugh Parade and after two false starts, the quintet opens with a delicately tender intro and melody by Davis moving into an exceptionally gentle presentation showing off Miles' sentimental side. Coltrane follows, executing his thoughts intimately with refined grace



secured by the tasteful richness of the trio into a pensive ending by the leader.

The tempo moves upward for the first side finale, I Could Write A Book by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart. This show tune comes from the 1940 Broadway musical Pal Joey. The trio makes a brief introduction before the quintet delivers the medium-fast melody collectively. Miles takes off on the lead solo with some fast blowing that sets the tone. John attacks the next reading with formidable energy and Red climaxes the performances with exhilarating agility before Davis' theme reprise ends abruptly. Sonny Rollins' Oleo was written in 1954 and first recorded on the album, Miles Davis With Sonny Rollins. This jazz classic is one of Rollins' most recorded compositions and the title comes from the butter substitute, Oleomargarine that was first made in France in 1869. It begins the second side with two false starts and some studio small talk leading to the leader's quick intro and fast-paced theme treatment with Trane finishing the melody. Miles rips into the lead solo with an expedient performance. John soars high into the sky on the second solo and Red provides a speedy resolution of the interpretations with sprightly notes ahead of the quintet's reprise and brisk ending. Paul and Philly provide the propulsive power behind each soloist on Oleo, inspiring them to the next plateau.

Up next is the 1943 popular song, It Could Happen To You by Jimmy Van Heusen and Johnny Burke. This standard has been a favorite for musicians and vocalists in the jazz and pop genres for more than seventy years. Jo Stafford made the first recording with The Paul Weston Orchestra for Capitol Records (158). Actress Dorothy Lamour sang the song in its debut movie appearance, the 1944 musical comedy And The Angels Sing. The group eases the throttle back for this rendition with Miles establishing the relaxing midtempo framework for the group on the melody. He then goes to work with a sweet-toned delivery that's pitch-perfect. John follows with a compelling statement as cool as the other side of the pillow and Red delivers a very happy melodic interpretation showing great interaction with Paul and Philly into the quiet coda. The 1943 jazz standard, Woody'n You aka Woody 'n' You by Dizzy Gillespie was written for bandleader and clarinetist Woody Herman ends the album at an uptempo beat. The song starts with a brief introduction by Garland ahead of the quintet's lively theme. Miles fuels the lead solo with plenty of fire from his open horn, then Trane delivers an aggressively energized performance showing

plenty of strength and virility. The final statement of the album is split between Miles and Philly who deliver passionate phrases that flow effortlessly until the closing chorus and soft fade into emptiness followed by a few final words by Miles.

Relaxin' With The Miles Davis Quintet is part of Analogue Productions' Prestige Mono Series and the sound quality is crystal clear demonstration class, and spectacular. The mastering is by Kevin Gray of Coherent Audio and was cut from Rudy's original analog masters using two-hundred-gram Virgin Vinyl, pressed by QRP (Quality Record Pressings) and features a deluxe high-gloss laminated album cover. The record is very quiet until the music starts, and what's great about listening to this reissue are the false starts, and Miles' comments while talking to Rudy. Their brief conversations transport the listener into the studio as this album is being recorded, making them part of the event. On a good mid-fi or high-end audio system, the tonal balance between the highs, midrange, and the low end will stand out. There's inspired playing from each member of the quintet on every track, and Relaxin' With The Miles Davis Quintet is a great album of standards. It's also a perfect choice to sit back, listen, and enjoy any time of the day, evening, or night! Please continue to stay safe and take care of yourselves during the Coronavirus pandemic. I'll see you next month and Happy Listening Gang!

Cookin' With The Miles Davis Quintet (Prestige PRLP 7094); It Could Happen To You (Capitol Records 158); Miles Davis With Sonny Rollins (Prestige PRLP 187); Steamin' With The Miles Davis Quintet (Prestige PRLP 7200/PRST 7580); Workin' With The Miles Davis Quintet (Prestige PRLP 7166/PRST 7166) – Source: Discogs.com

Oleo, It Could Happen To You, Woody'n You – Source: JazzStandards.com

If I Were A Bell, You're My Everything, I Could Write A Book, Oleomargarine – Source: Wikipedia.org