



Milt Jackson – Bags' Opus
United Artists

Milt Jackson steps into the spotlight to begin October with one of my favorite albums from 1959, *Bags' Opus* (United Artists UAL 4022/UAS 5022). This is my album to listen to when reading or relaxing because the music is so soothing, I can listen to it endlessly. Here, the vibist is leading an exceptional sextet consisting of Art Farmer on trumpet, Benny Golson on tenor sax, Tommy Flanagan on piano, Paul Chambers on bass, and Connie Kay on drums. My copy used in this report is the 1976 Japanese Stereo reissue (United Artists GXC-3135) by King Record Company, and the album opens with the leader in ballad mode on *Ill Wind* by Harold Arlen and Ted Koehler. It was written in 1934 and performed by vocalist Adelaide Hall in their final show at The Cotton Club. Milt's vibes are delicately discreet on the melody and as the featured soloist, he tells an exquisitely tender story matched by the sensitive accompaniment of the rhythm section into a gorgeous finale.

Blues For Diahann is Jackson's tribute to actress, model, singer, Diahann Carroll, and the only original of the session. It opens with a jubilant intro by the rhythm section and a collective theme by the sextet. Golson takes off first with some straightforward blowing. Farmer doesn't let up the pace on the next reading with a spirited solo. Flanagan follows with a dazzling display of his virtuosity, and Chambers gives a spicy performance that's worth the wait. Kay begins the next reading with some brisk brushwork in a shared statement with Jackson. The leader wraps up everything with a short workout ahead of the close. *Afternoon In Paris* by John Lewis was written in 1949 and was first recorded by Phineas Newborn Jr. on the album, *Here Is Phineas-The Piano Artistry of Phineas Newborn Jr.* (1956). Lewis made it the title song for his 1957 release with guitarist Sacha Distel, and the group takes this tune for an easy ride with five soulful statements by Milt, Benny, Art, Tommy, and Paul.

Benny Golson's timeless 1957 jazz standard, *I Remember Clifford*, was written to honor the memory of trumpet player Clifford Brown who alongside pianist Richie Powell and his wife Nancy perished in an auto accident a year earlier. It opens Side Two delicately with the front line featured on the melody and reprise. Bags gives this evergreen all the poise and elegance it deserves on a sublimely beautiful performance backed by the trio. *Thinking of You* was composed by Harry Ruby and Bert Kalmar in 1927, and debuted in the Broadway show, *The Five O'Clock Girl* that year. It was also featured in the 1950 film, *Three Little Words*. Art takes the lead on the gentle opening chorus with Milt and the rhythm section providing the lush background. He continues on the first solo with an intimately moving interpretation. Bags comes in next to add a touch of sensuous beauty to the closing statement ahead of Art's return for the tenderly expressive coda.

Benny Golson wrote *Whisper Not* in 1956 while a member of Dizzy Gillespie's Big Band. It's one of his most popular tunes and has been a signature song of Golson's since its inception. Leonard Feather wrote lyrics for Anita O'Day who recorded it in 1962. The sextet begins the melody at an easy beat with an irresistible toe-tapping melody. Jackson cruises at a comfortable speed with impeccably crafted lines. Farmer works the next solo using his mute with a firm tone and relaxing informality. Golson gets the next nod for an infectious groove that just won't stop, and Flanagan sparkles on the final reading before the sextet reassembles to take the song out. *Bags' Opus* was produced by Jack Lewis and engineered by Tommy Nola whose work can also be found on Argo, Atlantic, Blue Note, Cadet, Contemporary, Jazztime, Mercury, Riverside, and Verve to name a few. The album has a superb soundstage with an excellent definition from each instrument bringing the musicians from your speakers into your listening room.

Milt Jackson was one of the extraordinary musicians of jazz whose consistency on record is unequalled. He played and recorded with Cannonball Adderley, Ray Charles, Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Coleman Hawkins, Wes Montgomery, and countless others as a leader, sideman, and on many records as a member of The Modern Jazz Quartet. He was given the nickname Bags by a Detroit bass player, referring to the bags under his eyes. I've been a huge fan of his ever since seeing him live in 1972. On *Bags' Opus*, Jackson and his colleagues offer an album of easy listening jazz that



any fan of Post-Bop should consider a must-have for their library!

Afternoon In Paris (Atlantic 1267); Anita O'Day and The Three Sounds (Verve Records V-8514/V6-8514); Here Is Phineas-The Piano Artistry of Phineas Newborn Jr. (Atlantic 1235/SD 1235) – Source: Discogs.com

Ill Wind, I Remember Clifford – Source: JazzStandards.com

Afternoon In Paris, Thinking of You, Whisper Not – Wikipedia.org



Bobby Jaspar – Tenor and Flute Riverside

Bobby Jaspar steps into the spotlight for this second discussion with his 1957 album, Tenor and Flute (Riverside RLP 12-240). I first heard him on two records he made with Herbie Mann, Flute Flight, and Flute Soufflé (1957). Bobby was born in Liège, Belgium, and began playing the piano at eleven and the clarinet at sixteen. He later switched to the flute and tenor saxophone, and in 1950 began working with French pianists Henri Renaud and Bernard Peiffer. Jaspar was also a member of the Bop Shops band and played and recorded with Toshiko Akiyoshi, Chet Baker, Kenny Burrell, Donald Byrd, John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Milt Jackson, J.J. Johnson, Hank Jones, John Rae, and Wynton Kelly. He was also married to jazz pianist and singer Blossom Dearie. His supporting cast is Idrees Sulieman on trumpet (tracks: A1, B1, B2), George Wallington on piano, Wilbur Little on bass, and Elvin Jones on drums. My copy used in this report is the 1976 Japanese Mono reissue (Riverside SMJ-6156M).

The opener, Seven Up is Bobby's easy blowing vehicle beginning with everyone laid-back on the melody. Idrees starts the song in a nice happy mood on the first interpretation, then Bobby takes over for an

outstanding solo as solid as the Rock of Gibraltar. George follows with some carefree cruising that's a treat for the ears and Wilbur is rhythmically infectious on a short statement ahead of the ensemble's breezy climax. Jaspar changes to flute for My Old Flame, written in 1934 by Arthur Johnston and Sam Coslow. It appeared in the film, Belle of The Nineties that year. He embraces the jazz standard lovingly on the melody and paints a compassionate portrait on the opening statement. The second presentation by Wallington is tenderly expressed, then the leader gives a second performance that's delicately pretty and Jones offers some beautifully shaped brushwork on the closer ahead of a tranquil ending.

Bobby returns to tenor sax for a spirited quartet rendition of All of You, Cole Porter's 1954 jazz standard that first appeared in the 1955 Broadway musical, and 1957 film, Silk Stockings. The quartet gives a lift to this timeless classic with a briskly paced theme treatment. The saxophonist displays a lively intensity on the lead solo, then George adds a bouncy effervescence to the second reading. Wilbur and Elvin split the third statement for a short, incisive comment, followed by Bobby and Elvin who guide us into the reprise with an expressive exchange. Idrees Sulieman's Doublemint is an energetic companion to his blues, Juicy Fruit, heard on The Hawk Flies High (1957). It opens Side Two with a collective infectious melody. Jaspar cooks vivaciously on the first statement, then Sulieman breaks into a robust reading. Wallington moves in next for a scintillating solo and Jones finds something good to say on the closing chorus sharing notes with the front line.

George Wallington wrote the final two tunes on Tenor and Flute beginning with his tenderly passionate ballad, Before Dawn. It starts slowly with a breathtakingly beautiful theme by Bobby and the rhythm section. Jaspar then creates a mood of ecstasy on the first performance, then Idrees delivers a fine solo punctuated with delicate lyricism. George follows, sharing a brief moment of intimacy before Bobby adds a few additional affectionate remarks preceding the ensemble's sultry coda. Jaspar and the rhythm section take Sweet Blanche for a brisk ride on the finale with the leader back on flute. The quartet opens with a cheerfully pleasant theme and Jaspar excels with vigorous flair on the first interpretation. Wallington heads into the second reading expressing considerable delight, then Jaspar and Jones take us home sparring with each other into a satisfying climax.



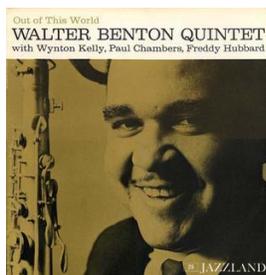
Tenor and Flute was produced by Orrin Keepnews, and the man behind the dials was Jack Higgins.

I was pleasantly surprised with the sound quality, the instruments produce an exceptional soundstage across the highs, midrange, and low end that's right on the money. The analog Mono transfer by Victor Musical Industries from the original tapes has been gorgeously remastered and transports the listener to the studio alongside the musicians during the session. During 1961 & 1962, Jaspar formed a quintet with guitarist René Thomas and performed in a series of concerts and several recordings including appearing on *Chet Is Back* (1962). He passed away from a heart attack at age thirty-seven on February 28, 1963. I've enjoyed listening to this album and am happy to have it in my library. If you aren't familiar with Bobby Jaspar, are a fan of Hard-Bop or tenor sax, I hope you'll seek *Tenor and Flute* out during your next vinyl hunt. It's a perfect album to get into jazz and the music is sure to make you tap your foot!

Chet Is Back (RCA Victor PML-10307); *Flute Flight* (Prestige PRLP 7124); *Flute Soufflé* (Prestige PRLP 7101); *The Hawk Flies High* (Riverside RLP 12-233) – Source: Discogs.com

My Old Flame – Source: JazzStandards.com

All of You, Bobby Jaspar – Source: Wikipedia.org



Walter Benton Quintet – *Out of This World*
Jazzland

Up next from the library is a recent acquisition by a musician I first heard on two Clifford Brown albums, *Best Coast Jazz* (1955), and *Clifford Brown All-Stars* (1956). *Out of This World* (Jazzland JLP 28/928S) is the only album tenor saxophonist Walter Benton recorded as a leader but is brilliant swinging jazz with a stellar cast. Freddie Hubbard (listed as Freddy, tracks: A1, A2, B1, B2) on trumpet, Wynton Kelly on

piano, Paul Chambers on bass, Jimmy Cobb (tracks: A2, A3, B2), and Albert Heath (tracks: A1, A4, B1, B3) on drums. Walter began playing the saxophone in high school, he's also worked with John Anderson, Clifford Brown, Kenny Clarke, Eric Dolphy, Victor Feldman, Slide Hampton, Quincy Jones, Abbey Lincoln, Perez Prado, Max Roach, and Gerald Wilson. My copy used in this report is the 1993 Japanese Stereo reissue (Jazzland VIJJ-30049).

Side One opens with the title song, *Out of This World* was written in 1944 by Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer. It grabs hold from the beginning of the collective midtempo melody and doesn't let go until Freddie's deceptively easy swing before picking up the pace for a bristling first reading. Walter comes in next exhibiting an optimistic spirit on the next solo, and Wynton works out a few logical ideas on the closer preceding the coda and fadeout. Walter's *Altar* is the first of five originals by the leader, and an easy-going blues giving everyone solo space except Cobb who takes over on drums. Benton kicks off the solos leisurely but builds his tone into a delightful interpretation. Hubbard makes a terrific impression on the second solo. Kelly is superbly articulate on the third reading and Chambers takes the bass for some tuneful walking on the final statement ahead of the closing chorus and climax.

Iris is a tender ballad by Benton beginning with a brief intro by Freddie before Walter takes over on the gentle theme. The first of the leader's two solos is slow, easy, and meaningful possessing a soulful tone. Wynton's second statement is richly creative, then Walter returns for a few final softly, soothing comments before the close. *Night Movement* is an uptempo romp by Benton with a brief appearance by Hubbard during the melody, and Heath returning to the drums. The saxophonist gives two brief readings of ferocious intensity with a short speedy statement by Kelly in-between. *Side Two* opens with Benton's *A Blue Mood*. This tune is a midtempo blues starting with the rhythm section's brief introduction into the ensemble's melody. The solo order is Hubbard, Benton, Kelly, Chambers, and each man applies some down-home cooking to each of their solos, making them quite appetizing.

Walter's *Azil* is fast and swinging, returning the quintet to uptempo speed on the swift-footed melody. Benton begins the solos with a scintillating conversation, then Hubbard comes in for a vigorously energetic reading. Kelly closes with an electrically charged interpretation with Chambers and Cobb supplementing the power



into the quintet's ending. *Lover Man* by Jimmy Davis, Roger Ramirez, and James Sherman is a timeless standard from *The Great American Songbook*. It ends the album with a sensuous performance by the quartet with Heath back behind the drums. Kelly and the trio begin the introduction blossoming into the foursome's opening chorus. Walter opens with a delicately tasteful first statement. Wynton adds intimate lyricism to the second reading, then Paul performs so warmly you could bask in its glow like a sunbath. Walter wraps up the song with a beautifully phrased chorus into the coda.

Six years after recording this album, Benton retired from music altogether, becoming a real estate agent. He passed away on August 14, 2000, at the age of sixty-nine. *Out of The World* was originally produced by Orrin Keepnews and engineered by Ray Fowler. Victor Entertainment (formerly Victor Musical Industries) has done an exceptional job with the mastering of the album from the original tapes. The music emerges from your speakers as if the group is playing right in front of your favorite chair. If you're looking for an excellent Hard-Bop album for your library, and have not heard Walter Benton before, I submit for your consideration, *Out of This World* by The Walter Benton Quintet. It's a stellar album of the genre that's a treat for your ears!

Best Coast Jazz (EmArcy MG-36039), Clifford Brown All-Stars (EmArcy MG-36102) – Source: Discogs.com
Lover Man – Source: JazzStandards.com

Out of This World – Source: Wikipedia.org



Art Blakey & The Jazz Messengers – *Just Coolin'*
 Blue Note

Art Blakey was one of the most exciting drummers in the annals of jazz and a superb bandleader of one of its greatest ensembles, The Jazz Messengers. This morning's choice from the library is a rediscovered gem from the Blue Note vaults, recorded in 1959 but

postponed for release because four of the tunes appeared on two live LP's, Art Blakey and The Jazz Messengers at The Jazz Corner of The World, Volume 1 & 2, that year. *Just Coolin'* (Blue Note ST-64201) finds the drummer in the company of Lee Morgan on trumpet, Hank Mobley on tenor sax, Bobby Timmons on piano, and Jymie Merritt on bass. My copy used in this report is the 2020 Stereo Audiophile album, and *Side One* opens with *Hipsippy Blues*, a midtempo swinger by Hank Mobley. The quintet establishes the melody nice and easy, then Hank kicks off the solos with a performance as smooth as Tennessee whiskey. Lee swings from start to finish on the next reading and Bobby speaks to us next with a relaxing interpretation that'll have your fingers snapping and toes tapping before the close.

Close Your Eyes is a popular song that was written in 1933 by Bernice Petkere. Morgan takes the lead on the opening chorus and first solo with some spirited playing. Mobley brings some lively ideas to the second statement with a sassy groove. Timmons follows, swinging at a sprightly flowing dance tempo and Merritt improvises in fine form on a brief finale anchored by both horns and Blakey's sustained backdrop. *Jimerick* is a speedy tune that takes off from the trio's quick intro and ensemble's brisk theme. Lee opens the solos vigorously, then Bobby powers the next reading with electrical energy. Hank follows with a brief statement of excessive intensity, and Art applies some aggressive drumming to the closing chorus before the climax. *Quick Trick* by Bobby Timmons starts *Side Two* with the quintet's collective melody at midtempo. Timmons slips comfortably into the first solo with assistance from both horns near the end. Morgan takes over for a bright, brassy statement, then Mobley takes it easy on the final reading. Blakey makes two brief comments during the reprise.

M&M is an uptempo burner by Hank Mobley named for the front line opening with the ensemble in unison on an enthusiastic theme. Hank powers the lead solo with a dynamic charge of high voltage. Lee takes the next reading for an exhilarating workout, then Bobby swings with exciting agility on the third performance. Blakey gets the final spot for a fiery exchange with both horns before the coda. *Just Coolin'*, also by Hank was first heard on his 1955 debut album, *Hank Mobley Quartet*. It ends the record at midtempo for the ensemble's collective melody with everyone getting solo opportunities. Mobley establishes a solid presence on the opening statement with friendly informality. Morgan responds with a dazzling exhibition as crisp



and fresh as a cool fall evening. Timmons gets into a splendid groove on the next spot of this happy swinger with skillful construction. Merritt speaks fluently on the fourth performance with a drop-dead gorgeous tone. The final statement is by Blakey who makes his drums speak profoundly preceding the quintet's return and climax.

The original session was produced by Alfred Lion and engineered by Rudy Van Gelder. This release was produced by Zev Feldman of Resonance Records, analog mastered by Kevin Gray at Cohearent Audio, and pressed at RTI on 180-gram Audiophile Vinyl. The record is very quiet, and the sound is as clear as the day it was recorded. It also has a dynamic soundstage of highs, midrange, and bass emerging from your speakers as if the group's playing in front of your sweet spot. If you're in the mood for Hard-Bop and are a fan of Art Blakey & The Jazz Messengers during their years at Blue Note. I invite you to fasten your seat belts and enjoy a ride of great jazz on Just Coolin' that you won't regret adding to your library! Please continue to stay safe and take care of yourselves during the Coronavirus pandemic. I'll see you next month and Happy Listening Gang!

Hank Mobley Quartet (Blue Note BLP 5066) – Source: Discogs.com

Close Your Eyes – Source: JazzStandards.com