



ART FARMER/JIM HALL

**BIG BLUES**



Art Farmer & Jim Hall – Big Blues  
ORG Music

This first choice from the library to begin September I acquired after hearing a selection on SiriusXM's Real Jazz channel. The album is titled *Big Blues* (CTI Records CTI 7083), released in 1979 and the two men co-leading this enjoyable date are Art Farmer on flugelhorn and Jim Hall on guitar. Rounding out the ensemble are Mike Mainieri on vibes, Mike Moore on bass, and Steve Gadd on drums. My copy used in this report is the 2017 ORG Music Stereo Audiophile reissue (ORGM-2019). The song that initially sparked my interest leads off the first side, Benny Golson's 1956 contemporary jazz classic, *Whisper Not!* It's one of his most recorded compositions and also became a beloved vocal after Leonard Feather added lyrics in 1962. The quintet jointly creates a mellow melody with a blues beat to begin the song. Jim makes his guitar sing first with a relaxed casualness and steady rhythm. Art gets into an infectious laid-back groove next moving upward with bright chops and impeccable prowess. Mike takes over for the finale with an astonishing drive and intensity preceding the reprise and gentle coda.

The 1969 jazz standard, *A Child Is Born* by Thad Jones closes the first side starting gently with a brief introduction and tender theme by the rhythm section. Farmer starts the soloing with a ravishingly beautiful, muted performance, followed by Hall who delivers passionately elegant lines on the next interpretation. Mainieri gives a delicately gentle and evocative presentation recalling the spirit and imagination of the song's composer into the serenely beautiful climax. *Big Blues* by Jim Hall starts the second side with a spirited midtempo opening chorus by the ensemble and the solo order is the same as on *Whisper Not*. Jim

takes the lead here, showing us his versatility with charming articulation. Art follows, using the mute to deliver skillful assertion on the next reading. Mike's closing statement is captivating from the moment it starts, expressing joy into the reprise and fadeout. *Pavane For A Dead Princess* by Maurice Ravel ends the album and was written as a solo piano piece in 1899. The song's original title is *Pavane pour une infante défunte* (*Pavane for a Dead Infanta*) and the ensemble begins the introduction and melody at a slow tempo fitting the original composition. Farmer steps up first, back on the open horn, beginning as he did on the theme, then raises the temperature to midtempo before returning to a softer mood for the close. Mainieri pulls out all the stops on the next reading with a sparkling presentation. Hall takes the final bow with a gorgeous performance preceding the reprise and graceful fadeout.

*Big Blues* was originally produced by Creed Taylor and engineered by David Palmer who worked at Electric Lady Studios, and Joel Cohn who's worked on many CTI albums. This reissue was mastered from the original analog tapes by Bernie Grundman and pressed on 180-gram Audiophile vinyl at Pallas Group in Germany. As was the case of many of the classic CTI Records, the sound quality is first-rate with an excellent soundstage across the highs, midrange, and low end that won't disappoint the listener in the sweet spot of their music room. Art Farmer and Jim Hall recorded together four other times, *Interaction* (1963), *Live at The Half Note*, *To Sweden With Love* (1964), and *Panorama-Live at The Village Vanguard* (1997). Each is highly recommended, and I feel the same can be said for *Big Blues*. I invite you to make time for this one on your next vinyl hunt, it's an enjoyable album of Contemporary Jazz with extraordinary chemistry, and exceptional performances you won't soon forget!

*Interaction* (Atlantic 1412/SD 1412); *Live at The Half Note* (Atlantic 1421/SD1421); *Panorama-Live at The Village Vanguard* (Telarc Jazz CD-83408); *To Sweden With Love* (Atlantic 1430/SD 1430) – Source: Discogs.com



Whisper Not, A Child Is Born – Source: JazzStandards.com

Pavane For A Dead Princess – Source: Wikipedia.org



Yuko Mabuchi Trio – Yuko Mabuchi Trio, Volume 2  
Yarlung Records

I'd reached the end of a very long day and was ready to relax and unwind with some piano jazz. I went to the library and came across Yuko Mabuchi Trio, Volume 2 (Yarlung Records YAR71621-161V). The second LP from the trio's live performance at The Brain and Creativity Institute's Cammilleri Hall with bandmates, Del Atkins on bass and Bobby Breton on drums. The concert honored the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The Los Angeles and Orange County Audio Society, plus President and CEO, Bob Levi's 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday. My copy used in this report is the 2018 45-rpm Stereo Audiophile release. Yuko starts Side One with a trio of solo standards, All The Things You Are by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II, Take The "A" Train by Billy Strayhorn, and Satin Doll by Duke Ellington, Strayhorn, and Johnny Mercer. She begins with a stunningly beautiful interpretation capturing the song's romanticism. Yuko then takes a vivaciously playful ride on The "A" Train with zestful excitement. She wraps up the trilogy with an invigorating interpretation of Satin Doll receiving an ovation from the audience at the song's end.

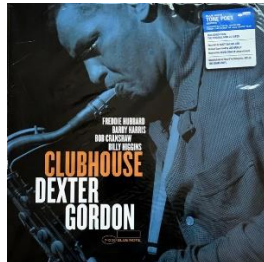
The ensemble begins a Japanese Medley trilogy next, Hazy Moon by Teiichi Okano, Cherry Blossom, the Japanese folk tune from the Edo period, and Look At The Sky by Hachidai Nakamura. Yuko opens with a gentle introduction developing into a subtle collective theme. The mood of this first melody is incredibly

tender, and the soothing splendor of her solo is purely captivating. She also dominates on the second segment, bringing out the musical substance and expressive beauty in an attractive reading culminating with a regal coda. The finale picks up the pace with the trio fitting together like fingers in a glove on the lively theme. Her technique is assured and quite confident in a dazzling exhibition against the backdrop set up perfectly by Del and Bobby. Side Two starts with Sona's Song, the pianist's very touching tribute to a beautiful young girl in her family. The threesome makes the most of this original with seamless pacing and execution. Yuko demonstrates a mature elegance and heartfelt love in every note of her reverently lush performance before a serene summation.

The group takes the audience and listener to the Caribbean on Sonny Rollins' signature song, St. Thomas with a festive holiday atmosphere right from the start. Yuko invites everyone to enjoy the ride on a jubilantly cheerful lead statement with Atkins and Breton sustaining the rhythm. The drummer adds some buoyant brushwork for a propulsive reading before Yuko puts the finishing touches on a memorable, jazz-filled celebration. Like its companion, Yuko Mabuchi Trio, Volume 2 has an outstanding soundstage across the highs, midrange, and low end, making it a good choice to show off a high-end audio system. This album was engineered by Bob Attiyeh and Arian Jansen, and mastered by Attiyeh, and Steve Hoffman. The 45-rpm remastering is by Bernie Grundman. The trio's musicianship is excellent throughout the album and they shift gears as smoothly as a sports car. I'll leave you with what I think is an ideal ending for my report, it comes from the title of an old 1960 LP by The Joyce Collins Trio: Girl Here Plays Mean Piano. Yuko Mabuchi does this very well and if you're discovering her for the first time, you're in for a treat!

All The Things You Are, Satin Doll, Girl Here Plays Mean Piano (Jazzland JLP 24), Take The "A" Train – Source: Discogs.com

St. Thomas – Source: Wikipedia.org



Dexter Gordon – Clubhouse  
Blue Note Tone Poet Series

Any opportunity I get to discuss an album by tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon is always welcome, so I begin this report with a recent addition to the library. Clubhouse (Blue Note Classic LT-989) is a date from 1965 that also produced the album, Gettin' Around, but was shelved until 1979. The ensemble is a stellar one, Freddie Hubbard on trumpet; Barry Harris on piano; Bob Cranshaw on bass and Billy Higgins on drums. My copy used in this report is the 2019 Blue Note Tone Poet Series Stereo Audiophile reissue (Blue Note B0029356-01 - LT-989). The quintet gets into some Hanky Panky to begin Side One with a melody march. Dexter swings with a bluesy beat on the opening statement. Freddie takes over for a neatly paced reading next. Barry ices the closer with a laid-back attitude into a marvelous finale. I'm A Fool To Want You is from 1951 by Frank Sinatra, Jack Wolf, and Joel Herron. Sinatra co-wrote the lyrics and recorded it for Columbia that year. Gordon expresses personal thoughts of lyrical reflection on the opening chorus and first solo. Hubbard and Harris also arouse tender emotions on two beautiful readings before the luxurious coda.

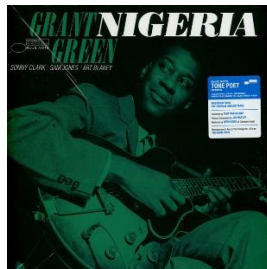
Devillette is by bassist Ben Tucker and was first heard on the 1971 live album, The Montmartre Collection, Vol. 1. This midtempo swinger makes a wonderful vehicle for the quintet to swing easily on the melody. Dexter struts smoothly into the first solo, then Freddie speaks proficiently next. Barry closes with an articulate, passionate interpretation ahead of the conclusion. The quintet convenes inside Gordon's Clubhouse to start Side Two for a laid-back meeting offering everyone a solo opportunity. Harris gives a

charming introduction blossoming into the ensemble's collective theme. Gordon starts with a soulfully, mellow statement, then Hubbard offers some rhythmically incisive ideas. Harris follows for a melodic mix of grace and fire that's especially effective. Bob has a definitive moment on the fourth interpretation and Billy wraps things up in a brief exchange with the front line. Jodi is a thoughtfully provocative tribute to Gordon's wife at the time. Dexter opens with a perfect evocation of love on the melody and first solo. Freddie creates a concise mood of ecstasy next, and Barry adds a touch of sweet lyricism preceding the romantic ending.

The album ends with a tune by guitarist Rudy Stevenson that I first heard on the 1961 album, Two Feet In The Gutter, Lady Iris B. The solo order is Gordon, Hubbard, Harris, Cranshaw and their messages are full of joy and happiness into an immensely satisfying ending that's positive and upbeat. Clubhouse was produced by Joe Harley of Music Matters Jazz and mastered by Kevin Gray of Coherent Audio from Rudy Van Gelder's original analog master tape utilizing 180-gram audiophile vinyl. The Blue Note Tone Poet Series reissues include high-definition gatefold photos that are worthy of wall art and superb packaging of the covers. The music is simply amazing, and the sound is reference quality with a breathtaking soundstage that's thrilling to say the least. Dexter Gordon was a jazz master in every sense as a bandleader, composer, and tenor saxophonist. Clubhouse is nearly forty-minutes of exceptional jazz and an excellent choice for Blue Note to rescue from oblivion for any fan who loves Hard-Bop that you shouldn't miss on your next vinyl hunt!

Gettin' Around (Blue Note BLP 4204/BST 84204); I'm A Fool To Want You (Columbia 39425); The Montmartre Collection, Vol. 1 (Black Lion BL-108); Two Feet In The Gutter (Epic LA 16021/BA 17021) – Source: Discogs.com

I'm A Fool To Want You – Source: Wikipedia.org



Grant Green – Nigeria  
Blue Note Tone Poet Series

Guitarist Grant Green steps into the spotlight to end September with his LP, *Nigeria* (Blue Note Classic LT-1032), recorded in 1962, but not released until 1980. He was discovered by label mate Lou Donaldson in a St. Louis bar and became one of the busiest musicians in the label's history. He's joined by three men who were well versed in Hard-Bop, Sonny Clark on piano, Sam Jones on bass, and Art Blakey on drums. The album's title is a play on words when spelled backward, it appears as *Airegin*, written in 1954 by Sonny Rollins, and first heard on the LP, *Miles Davis With Sonny Rollins*. My copy used in this report is the 2020 Blue Note Tone Poet Series Stereo Audiophile reissue (B0031299-01 – LT-1032). The quartet opens with an aggressive melody in unison, Grant begins the first solo displaying youthful virility. Sonny delivers a potent interpretation fueling the rhythm section's accompaniment. Sam also says plenty in a heated excursion that keeps the fire burning brightly. Art enters next with awe-inspiring intensity, then Grant adds the exclamation point with assertive exuberance into the ensemble's energetic coda.

The remaining four tunes come from *The Great American Songbook*, beginning with *It Ain't Necessarily So* by George and Ira Gershwin. This standard made its debut in their 1935 opera, *Porgy and Bess*, and the quartet seasons their version with a Latin flavor, setting the mood for two lengthy readings by Green and Clark. Grant's opening statement is delivered with a down-home taste that will keep your foot tapping to the contagious rhythm. The pianist responds with a skillful improvisation well matched to the exceptional foundation by Jones and Blakey. You

can even hear Art's joyous comments and shouts in the background as each interpretation proceeds, then the drummer provides a brief exchange with Green before the group's closing chorus and a slow fade out. *Concentrate on You*, written in 1939 by Cole Porter opens Side Two. It premiered in the film, *Broadway Melody of 1940*. Grant allows his musical ideas to flow freely into a very intimate reading. Sonny also reveals the beauty of the lyrics in an exquisite presentation that's easy on the ears.

Up next is the 1946 tune by Sammy Cahn and Jule Styne, *The Things We Did Last Summer*. The song became a hit for Shelley Fabares, Dean Martin, Vaughan Monroe, Frank Sinatra, and Jo Stafford. Grant opens with a deceptively fragile melody, then shows tasteful modesty on the first solo. Clark follows respectfully, telling a heartwarming story in a sweet, sentimental way ahead of the affectionate reprise. The quartet returns to uptempo speed with a fiery rendition of the 1932 chestnut, *The Song Is You* by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II. It premiered in their musical, *Music In The Air*, that year. This popular standard has been recorded numerous times and is a favorite among musicians and vocalists. The quartet starts at a fast tempo with an invigorating melody treatment that jumps from the opening notes. Green maintains the jubilant beat on the lead solo ripping through each verse at a wailing velocity. Clark heightens the excitement when he takes over for a couple of furious verses with Blakey following for a brief exchange between the drummer and Grant keeping the beat strong into the close.

This reissue was supervised by Joe Harley from Alfred Lion's original session, mastered by Kevin Gray of Coherent Audio from Rudy Van Gelder's original tapes and pressed by RTI on 180-gram Audiophile vinyl. The soundstage is exemplary, placing the musicians in the middle of your listening room. Grant Green was unique among guitarists with an unmistakable sound. He began his career in his native St. Louis, Missouri as a Rhythm & Blues musician before working with Jimmy Forrest. His other influences alongside Charlie Christian were Charlie Parker and Lester Young. Green also toured with Lou



Donaldson, who brought him to Blue Note. He was signed to record as a leader rather than a sideman, and between 1961 and 1965, Grant recorded more LP's than any other musician on Blue Note's roster. Nigeria is the only time, Green recorded with Blakey and as a result, the listener reaps dividends by the musicianship exhibited on each tune. If you're a fan of any of the foursome, I invite you to check out Nigeria by Grant Green. An album that's a gem of surprises and unlimited listening pleasure if you're a fan of Hard-Bop! Please continue to stay safe and take care of yourselves during the Coronavirus pandemic. I'll see you next month and Happy Listening Gang!

Grant's First Stand (Blue Note BLP 4064/BST 84064); Green Street (BLP 4071/BST 84071); Grantstand (BLP 4086/BST 84086); Sunday Mornin' (Blue Note BLP 4099/BST 84099); The Latin Bit (Blue Note BLP 4111/BST 84111); Miles Davis with Sonny Rollins (Prestige PRLP 187) – Source: Discogs.com

Grant Green, I Concentrate on You, It Ain't Necessarily So, The Things We Did Last Summer, The Song Is You – Source: Wikipedia.org