

Dexter Gordon – One Flight Up
Blue Note

The first entry from my library to begin the month of August is an album I first heard in 1967 during one of my Saturday stops to **Record Rendezvous** in **Cleveland, Ohio**. It introduced me to tenor saxophonist **Dexter Gordon** who steps into the spotlight with his second LP recorded after moving abroad, **One Flight Up** (BLP 4176). It follows an excellent 1963 quartet album titled **Our Man In Paris** (BLP 4146/BST 84146). Gordon has been a staple on the jazz scene since the Bebop era in the forties when he was a member of **Billy Eckstine's Big Band** and would become a major influence for two future giants, **John Coltrane**, and **Sonny Rollins**. He made a choice to move abroad because he was treated much more fairly than here in the United States and considered an equal rather than a second-class citizen. There was also plenty of work in some of the best jazz clubs **Europe** and **France** had to offer. Joining him for this set are **Donald Byrd** on trumpet; **Kenny Drew** on piano; **Neils-Henning Ørsted Pedersen** on bass and **Art Taylor** on drums. My copy used in this report is the 1967 US Liberty Records Stereo reissue (BST 84176) featuring the traditional blue-white label. The LP opens with **Tanya** by Byrd which occupies the entire first side giving Dexter, Donald, and Kenny plenty of solo space to create three perfectly crafted interpretations. The trio begins this jazz journey, charting its course with a brief introduction that develops into a haunting theme treatment led by both horns. The leader is up first, working his magic on the opening chorus with an attractive tenor voice on nearly six minutes of joyful bliss. The composer shows off his chops next with a brilliant-toned performance which swings at a lower temperature but still sizzles on every note. On the final solo, Kenny's playing is passionate, thoughtful and articulate while Neils-Henning and Art provide the stylish foundation behind each soloist preceding the quintet's theme reprise and gentle fade into nothingness.

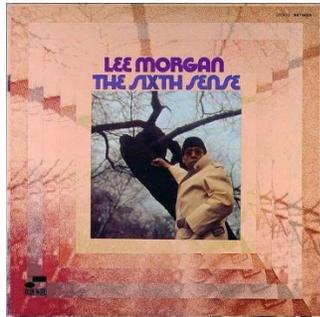
Side Two starts with an original by Drew titled **Coppin' The Haven** which begins at a slightly faster beat than **Tanya** but is still presented at a casual, laid-back tempo. This tune is introduced by the trio preceding the comfortable groove established by Byrd and Gordon on the theme. Dexter's opening statement is confident, firm and enjoyable, then Donald takes over for a carefully conceived and developed reading as smooth as a sled on fresh snow. Kenny shows he's perfectly at home on the closer, gliding through each verse efficiently with a light, refreshing beat before the ensemble reassembles for the climax. The album ends with the timeless standard, **Darn That Dream** by Jimmy Van Heusen and Eddie DeLange. It was written in 1939 and originally introduced in the Broadway musical, **Swingin' The Dream**. This is a gorgeous quartet performance with Dexter and the trio doing the honors. After an intimate introduction by the rhythm section, Dexter is the centerpiece here and his delivery on the melody and the lead solo is expressed gently with abundant warmth. The final reading of the album goes to Kenny who delivers his own message of tranquility with a thoroughly pleasant performance preceding the quartet's incredibly tender climax.

The album was originally recorded by French engineer, **Jacques Lubin**, and the sound quality is spectacular with a realistic soundstage of each instrument that places you right in the studio with the musicians. Both horns and the rhythm section have character and detail that comes through with a stunning impact. Throughout his nearly four-decade career, Gordon made some amazing records for a host of labels including **Bethlehem**, **Decca**, **Dial**, **Dootone**, **Prestige**, **Savoy**, and **SteepleChase**. However, in my opinion, it was the five years he recorded for **Blue Note** (1961-1966) that are among the most precious jewels in his rich discography. He passed away on **April 25, 1990**, at the age of sixty-seven from kidney failure and cancer of the larynx. I'll be honest and tell you that an excellent to mint **Liberty Records** edition of **One Flight Up** is difficult to find, and if you're fortunate to find a copy in really good condition, it may be expensive. Your detective work, diligence, and ears will be rewarded however with thirty-seven minutes of some of the best Hard-Bop you'll hear. If you're a jazz fan and can afford the price of admission, I highly recommend **One Flight Up** by **Dexter Gordon**, an album I feel is an essential addition for any jazz library! For a more affordable alternative, there is the 2007 Stereo audiophile reissue of **One Flight Up** (CLP 7951) by **Cisco Music** which as of this writing is still in print!



Darn That Dream – Source: JazzStandards.com

Dexter Gordon – Source: Wikipedia.org



Lee Morgan – The Sixth Sense
Blue Note

Mention the name of **Lee Morgan** during his year's recording for **Blue Note** and one of six albums will immediately come to mind, **Blue Train** by John Coltrane (BLP 1577/BST 81577) from 1957. **Art Blakey and The Jazz Messengers** (BLP 4003/BST 84003) from 1958, and four of the most revered albums in his career and the label's history, **The Sidewinder** (BLP 4157/BST 84157) and **Search For The New Land** (BLP 4169/BST 84169), both released in 1964. **The Gigolo** (BLP 4214/BST 84214), released in 1966 and **Cornbread** (BLP 4222/BST 84222), released the same year as this LP. Each title is an excellent representative of Morgan's talent and considered essential cornerstones of any library featuring the talented bandleader, composer, and trumpet virtuoso from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Morgan was the youngest musician in **The Dizzy Gillespie Orchestra** and further honed his skills with **The Jazz Messengers**. Drug addiction would temporarily derail his career from 1961 to 1963, but he emerged stronger and recorded prolifically as a leader and sideman, getting his life back on track. His composition, **The Sidewinder** would become his biggest-selling album and greatest success, changing the direction for all Blue Note albums that would follow. My choice from the library this time is an excellent album titled **The Sixth Sense** (Blue Note BST 84335) featuring one of the best sextets in jazz recording their last album together before Morgan assembled what would be his final group in 1969. Joining him on this date are former Messengers **Jackie McLean** on alto sax; **Frank Mitchell** on tenor sax; **Cedar Walton** on piano and **Victor Sproles** on bass. **Billy Higgins** is on drums and needs no introduction because he's appeared on many Blue Note albums but was

never a member of Art Blakey's Messengers. My copy used in this report is the original 1967 Liberty Records Stereo LP with the traditional blue-white labels.

The title tune, the first of four compositions by Morgan begins the album with a relaxing drum introduction by Billy which grows into the intriguing Bossa Nova styled melody statement led by the front line. Lee moves right into an infectiously merry statement exhibiting incredible chops. Frank steps up next with a passionately frisky performance that's executed efficiently. Jackie's mellow tone on the third reading is constructed with soulful phrasing that's right on the beat. Cedar expresses a great depth of feeling and youthful energy on the fourth presentation, setting the stage for Billy who exchanges a spirited conversation with Lee on the final reading ahead of the sextet's closing chorus and fadeout. **Short Count**, another Morgan creation takes the sextet to uptempo with an aggressive delivery of the opening melody anchored by a rock-solid beat. McLean charges out of the gate like a man on fire with intense heat and lively effervescence that's pushed to a higher level of creativity with Lee and Frank playing behind him on his final chorus. Morgan raises the temperature a few more degrees on the next interpretation with an assertive tone pouring plenty of punch in each note. Mitchell follows with an electrically energized performance of youthful virility which weaves its spell with a vengeance, then Walton drives the final reading to uncharted heights with passionate virtuosity and irrepressible confidence.

Psychedelic is a midtempo original by Morgan that ends the first side with a danceable rhythm. This song starts with an introduction by the trio which sails smoothly into the collective theme treatment. Lee establishes the relaxing groove on the opening solo with thoughtful construction and fluid lines. Frank enters next, emphasizing the muscularity of his sound at a nice and easy pace. Jackie stamps his effervescent personality on the next reading with some fine blowing and Cedar's closing statement keeps things interesting with a remarkable performance ending with the ensemble vanishing softly. **Afreaka** is Mr. Walton's contribution to the date, starting the second side with an Afrobeat flavor possessing a very interesting rhythm also possessing a danceable beat. The solo order is Morgan, McLean, Mitchell, Walton and each of the principals provide plenty of musical inspiration on their individual statements.

Anti-Climax, the final Morgan original begins with a brief bass introduction by Victor preceding the sextet's upbeat



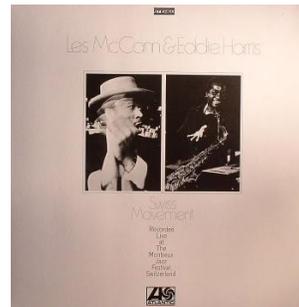
melody. Lee kicks off the solos with an intriguingly agile statement. Jackie follows with assertively jubilant verses on the next reading. Frank radiates ambitious energy on the next performance with impeccably delivered phrases, then Cedar wraps up the solos with a rhythmically aggressive reading which jams into the melody reprise and coda. **The Cry of My People** by jazz trumpeter Cal Massey brings the album to a close with a gorgeous quartet treatment by the leader and the rhythm section. Lee captures the warmth of the melody with a hauntingly, poignant performance on the muted trumpet, then picks up the pace gradually for his bewitchingly elegant opening statement. Cedar gets a moment to briefly express his feelings with dreamlike softness on the closing solo until Lee returns to end the song with so much compassion and feeling, it'll take your breath away.

The sound quality on **The Sixth Sense** is superb with all six instruments full of body, presence and a vibrantly, clear sound. **Lee Morgan** was an exceptional composer and musician who possessed an exciting restlessness and relentless drive, he recorded a total of twenty-five albums for Blue Note as a leader and appeared as a sideman on countless others, elevating each record to something special. But changes were on the way for the renowned trumpeter as **AllMusic.com** reviewer **Michael G. Nastos** describes. "The appropriate title **Sixth Sense** presents a transition between one of the most intriguing sextets during the last years of Post-Bop and Morgan's final ensembles that saw him reaching higher and higher before, like Icarus, falling from grace". He would die tragically from a gunshot wound by his common-law wife **Helen Morgan** on **February 19, 1972**, after an altercation while performing at **Slug's Saloon**, a jazz club in New York City. He left an incredible body of music also recording for **Savoy**, **Vee-Jay**, and **Jazzland** which still amazes and thrills jazz fans around the world. At just over thirty-nine minutes, **The Sixth Sense** by **Lee Morgan** is an absolute delight from beginning to end and well worth investigating for a spot in your library, especially if you're a fan of his, and Hard-Bop!

Quote by Michael G. Nastos – Source: AllMusic.com

Blue Train, Art Blakey and The Jazz Messengers, The Sidewinder, Search For The New Land, The Gigolo, Cornbread – Source: Discogs.com

Lee Morgan, Helen Morgan – Source: Wikipedia.org



Les McCann & Eddie Harris – Swiss Movement
Atlantic

Up next from the library is an LP by **Les McCann** and **Eddie Harris** who performed an impromptu concert in 1969 at **The Montreux Jazz Festival**. Their set became the highlight of the three-day extravaganza with the quintet on fire, blowing everyone away in attendance with their musicianship. **Swiss Movement** (Atlantic SD 1537) documents the group's performance featuring **Benny Bailey** on trumpet and McCann's incomparable rhythm section, **Leroy Vinnegar** on bass and **Donald Dean** on drums. My copy used for this report is the original 1969 US Stereo LP. **Compared To What** which opens the album was written by Gene McDaniels in 1966 and its lyrics depict what many Americans were feeling about The Vietnam War and the President of the United States. McCann's vocal interpretation also touches on other important topics of the day. He originally recorded the song for his 1966 album, **Les McCann Plays The Hits** (Limelight LM-82041/LS-86041). It also appeared on the 1969 debut album **First Take** (Atlantic SD 8230) by Soul-Jazz vocalist **Roberta Flack**.

Compared To What has been recorded by more than two-hundred seventy artists and is now considered a contemporary jazz and pop standard. Les gets the party started with a rousing solo introduction which expands to a two-instrument dialogue when Donald enters next, followed by Leroy and Eddie who complete the melody of the jubilant theme. It is McCann's exuberant vocals that make the song a crowd pleaser as he demonstrates on the lead statement with four vocal choruses of rhythmic force. Benny shows off his musical ideas with zestful assurance on the second reading, then Les returns for another round of swinging wit on the next vocal interpretation. Afterward, letting his fingers do the talking by soaring through each verse with exhilarating energy. Eddie takes the audience to church next with a dynamic closing performance into an electrifying climax that the crowd reacts to enthusiastically



with thunderous applause preceding the introduction of the quintet by McCann.

Cold Duck Time by Eddie Harris slows the pace to medium speed, opening with Les' introduction of the tune to the crowd. Leroy and Donald begin building the song softly to the relaxing theme statement by the quintet, then turns it over to Eddie who opens the soloing with a nice, easygoing groove. The next solo by Benny is a happy swinger delivered with thoughtful construction and captivating lines. Les ends this leisurely paced affair with a contagious swing on the closer, cooking all the way to the finale. **Kathleen's Theme** is the first of three originals from the pen of Les McCann, ending the first side with a showcase for Harris' tenor sax in a quartet performance. Eddie delivers a feisty reading with a spirited momentum and remarkable firmness supported by the smoothly pulsating groundwork of the rhythm section which receives a well-deserved ovation from the audience at its conclusion.

You Got It In Your Soulness, the second McCann composition and a title with a Gospel-flavored theme starts the second side with a vibrant introduction by the trio with Les scatting along in the background on the melody. He continues taking care of business on the first solo with soulful exuberance that'll have the listener up and dancing along. Harris steps in next, launching a funky, firm-toned attack as satisfying intellectually as it is emotionally and one of his finest interpretations on the album to these ears. Bailey responds on the next reading with electrically energetic phrases which leave an enduring impression. Les puts the exclamation point on the final performance with a radiant presentation of intense heat which glows brightly into the song's delightful conclusion.

The set ends with Les' **The Generation Gap** which opens with an invigorating introduction and melody by the trio, developing into a velvety smooth opening statement by Eddie. Benny eases into the next reading with an excellent example of straight-ahead bop that's also compelling. Les delivers the final interpretation with a stimulating workout that's worth the wait before the trio's gentle ending which marks the end of this exceptional live performance by **Les McCann** and **Eddie Harris**. The album was recorded by French engineer **Pierre Grandjean** and produced by two of the best in the music industry, **Nesuhi Ertegün** who helmed many of the best jazz, pop and R&B albums for **Atlantic Records** and **Joel Dorn**. Joel worked at the label when **Swiss Movement** was recorded but would go on to start three jazz labels, **32 Jazz**, **Label M**, and **Hyena Records**. The resulting

soundstage is a fine tonal balance of smooth, revealing highs and midrange, plus a deep, tight bass in the lower register. As for the music, **Les McCann**, **Eddie Harris**, and their colleagues gave **The Montreux Jazz Festival** audience a slice of jazz heaven with a performance that not only rocked the house that night but is still pleasing fans today. If you're a fan of live jazz, it doesn't get any better than that! **Swiss Movement** is currently in print as a 2018 Stereo audiophile reissue using the original catalog number (SD 1537) by the German label, **Speakers Corner Records**.

Les McCann Plays The Hits, First Take – Source: Discogs.com

Swiss Movement, The Montreux Jazz Festival, Compared To What, Nesuhi Ertegün, Joel Dorn – Source: Wikipedia.org



Don Byas & Bud Powell – A Tribute To Cannonball
Columbia Contemporary Masters Series

The final album from my library to end the month was recorded in 1961 but remained shelved until its release in 1979, four years after the death of the musician it honors. **A Tribute To Cannonball** (Columbia Contemporary Masters Series JC 35755) brings together **Don Byas** on tenor sax and **Bud Powell** on piano for a program of standards and two original tunes. Completing the ensemble are **Idrees Sulieman** (tracks: A5, B1, B2, B4) on trumpet; **Pierre Michelot** on bass and **Kenny Clarke** on drums. My copy used in this report is the original 1979 Stereo LP and only release on vinyl. The quartet launches the first side with a blazing version of the Cole Porter classic, **Just One of Those Things** which made its debut in the 1935 musical comedy **Jubilee**. The trio opens with a scintillating conversation led by Bud's nimble fingers flying over the keys for the first chorus of the melody. Don adds some fierce dialogue when he joins the discussion on the second chorus, then continues expressing his enthusiasm soaring through each verse with plenty of excitement on the first solo at a high



rate of speed. Bud comes into the final statement breathing fire with each chorus starting strong and ending stronger.

Jackie My Little Cat is the first of two songs written by Michelot and slows the tempo down to a subdued pace. The quartet opens with an elegantly tranquil theme preceding Byas who infuses the first solo with poignant phrases of extraordinary tenderness. Powell also shows he is a master of ballad improvisation with a very pretty statement possessing a lovely romanticism that compliments the rhythm section's voluptuously graceful groundwork into a sensuous finale. **Cherokee**, also known as **Indian Love Song**, was written in 1938 by Ray Noble as the first movement of his five-part **Indian Suite**. It became a hit for bandleader **Charlie Barnet** in 1939 but became a jazz standard after **Charlie Parker's** blistering rendition in 1941 as part of **The Kansas City Band**. The quartet takes Noble's classic at breakneck speed with a brisk duet by Don and Pierre on the introduction, then the foursome proceeds with a lightning-fast opening chorus. Byas kicks off the first of two solos with a vigorous performance, followed by Powell who flexes his muscles with incredible virility. The saxman returns for an extreme degree of intensity on the closing statement making an unforgettable impression that swings back to the ending chorus.

The timeless standard, **I Remember Clifford** by Benny Golson was written in 1957 to honor trumpeter **Clifford Brown** who was killed with pianist **Richie Powell** and his wife **Nancy** in an auto accident the year before. It was an immediate hit with critics, fans and fellow musicians after appearing on the albums released the same year, **Jazz Lab** by **Donald Byrd** and **Gigi Gryce** on Columbia (CL 998) and **Lee Morgan, Volume 3** on Blue Note (BLP 1557). **I Remember Clifford** is one of the most beautiful songs ever written and has been recorded countless times since its creation, **Jon Hendricks** added lyrics to the tune the same year. The quartet introduces this classic with a soft, tender melody, then Don takes the opening statement delivering each note with a gorgeous, warm interpretation. Bud plays delicately on the closer with a touch of beauty that's incredibly lovely. **Good Bait** ends the first side and introduces the quintet for the first time with **Idrees Sulieman** making the first of four appearances. This popular song was written in 1944 by Tadd Dameron and Count Basie, becoming a significant part of Basie's orchestra book over the next decade with many excellent recordings since its creation. Kenny's drums make the introduction proceeding both horns who lead the quintet through the melody. Don opens the solos, swinging comfortably with

long, flowing tenor statements conveying an exultant feeling. Idrees follows with a fierce presentation of notes which flow from his trumpet efficiently. Bud comes next with a deliciously spry, merry statement that's also just as engrossing. Pierre makes a brief comment on the closing solo with an unrestrained flow of bass lines in between a few final remarks by both horns.

The second side starts with the 1960 jazz standard, **Jeannine** by Duke Pearson which keeps the pace upbeat for the quintet. A brief workout by Clarke introduces the tune, segueing into the ensemble's medium-fast melody. Don digs into the lead statement with a smoldering groove of strong-toned, vibrant verses. Idrees' strong, sentimental choruses on the second solo are tightly voiced, melodic and executed smoothly. Bud flies high on the third reading with a message that swings with a muscular drive. Kenny makes a satisfying final statement before the horns return to drive **Jeannine** home. **All The Things You Are** by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II was originally written in 1939 for the unsuccessful Broadway musical **Very Warm For May** that year. The song survived, however, becoming one of Kern's most cherished and recorded compositions earning a revered place in **The Great American Songbook**. Byas and Sulieman exchange a peppy dialogue of energetic notes with the trio on the melody. Idrees exhibits a remarkably firm tone on the first solo that says something special on each verse. Don delivers the next message confidently in an authoritative manner which heightens the excitement for Bud who displays his virtuosity and matchless swing in an invigorating reading. Both horns split the next few phrases and Clarke provides a passionate showcase on a brief statement leading to the reprise of the theme.

Let me stop for a moment to explain the next tune. On the Side Two label, track three is listed as **Jackie** by pianist Hampton Hawes. It isn't Hawes' tune at all, what is heard is an alternate take of Pierre Michelot's **Jackie My Little Cat**. Like the version on Side One, it's a quartet piece and a showcase for both Byas and Powell. After a beautiful theme statement, Don's opening solo is a lovely demonstration of compassion and serene beauty. Bud follows with an exquisite interpretation that's a deeply introspective work on the closing performance alongside the affectionately graceful groundwork by Pierre and Kenny leading to the elegant ending. The album ends with the second original from the pen of bassist Michelot, **Myth** is a cheerful little tune full of fun and good spirits as evident by the sprightly introduction by the trio, leading to the front line's theme which swings consistently. Byas starts the solos with a



robust, straight-ahead performance that's well-defined. Sulieman follows with a bright, brassy tone that's beautifully articulated and Powell swings through the closing statement with exhilarating phrases that bounce happily to the superb foundation by Michelot and Clarke.

A Tribute To Cannonball was produced by **Cannonball Adderley** and the engineer was **Russ Payne** who worked on many jazz and pop LP's for Columbia Records. The music is excellent, and the sound quality is superb with an excellent soundstage for the instruments. The musicians surround your sweet spot placing you in the best seat to hear some amazing jazz by two giants of the Hard-Bop era, **Don Byas** and **Bud Powell** who were at the top of their game. The only issue I have with this album has nothing to do with the music, but the cover design. To read the excellent liner notes by Gary Giddins, you need a high wattage light bulb or a well-lighted room because the words are small and dark blue on a red background. This is particularly notable on the back cover where the picture of Bud Powell is. Whoever thought this was a good idea, I hope they've never been allowed to design another record cover. Please don't let this issue damper your enthusiasm from seeking out **A Tribute To Cannonball** on your next LP treasure hunt. Together, **Don Byas**, **Bud Powell**, **Pierre Michelot**, **Kenny Clarke** bring fresh vigor to six chapters of **The Great American Songbook** with special guest **Idrees Sulieman** plus two original works which are rhythmically interesting for an album that stands out among the musical gems as a precious jewel!

Cherokee, Indian Love Song, Indian Suite, I Remember Clifford, All The Things You Are, Very Warm For May – Source: JazzStandards.com

Charlie Barnet, The Kansas City Band, Jazz Lab, Lee Morgan, Volume 3 – Source: Wikipedia.org