



Tommy Flanagan - John Coltrane - Kenny Burrell - Idrees Suliman – The Cats
The Prestige Jazz Masterpieces Series

Regular readers of this column know I became a fan of jazz at the age of eight. In the fifty-six years since then, I've discovered a treasure trove of jazz records released in the year 1959 which have supplied some of the best music in the genre of Hard-Bop. The album up for discussion this time is a solid LP which meets that criteria perfectly. **The Cats** (New Jazz NJLP 8217) was recorded in 1957, but not released until two years later and could be perceived as one of the fine jam sessions released by Prestige during the fifties. This LP, however, is an informal blowing session that is led by **Tommy Flanagan** on piano; **John Coltrane** on tenor sax; **Kenny Burrell** on guitar and **Idrees Sulieman** on trumpet with the assistance of **Doug Watkins** on bass and **Louis Hayes** on drums. My copy used for this report is the 1977 Japanese Mono pressing (SMJ-6540 (M) – PG-6044) by Victor Musical Industries and is the first of two reissues that were released as part of **The Prestige Jazz Masterpieces Series**. The first side opens with **Minor Mishap**, the first of four compositions by Mr. Flanagan. The sextet begins the theme at a comfortable beat, stepping aside for Coltrane who builds a lead solo of smartly executed choruses. Burrell follows, making his presence felt on the next reading with a lot of fire in each note. Sulieman keeps the adrenaline flowing on the third interpretation with an infectiously upbeat reading, then Flanagan fills the next solo with compelling vitality. Hayes ends the performances, exchanging a few strong phrases with Coltrane, Burrell, and Sulieman which leads to the coda.

How Long Has This Been Going On? is the lone ballad on the album and receives a respectful treatment by the trio only that is gorgeous. Flanagan's warm and tender interpretation transforms the George and Ira Gershwin

classic into a performance worthy of repeated listening. This ageless evergreen was written in 1928 for the musical, **Funny Face**, but didn't appear until the premiere of the musical, **Rosalie**, that same year. It is one of the duo's best-loved, enduring compositions. It's also one of the most recorded standards by jazz and pop musicians, and vocalists alike over the past ninety years. **Eclypso** ends the first side with a Caribbean flavored rhythm during the opening and closing melody and returns the sextet to a medium beat. This Flanagan creation was originally released a year earlier as a trio performance on the 1958 album, **Overseas** (Prestige PRLP 7134) and the solo order is Flanagan, Sulieman, Coltrane, and Burrell. The pianist begins the first interpretation with virtuosic playing which makes and leaves a positive impression. Sulieman soars through the next series of verses with a very strong performance, then Coltrane solos next, effectively demonstrating at this young stage of his career, he possessed an insatiable desire to learn and grow while developing a flawless command and authority. Burrell takes the spotlight last, outdoing himself with an exceptional series of perfect licks that are stylish from start to finish.

The final two tunes which occupy the second side are both Flanagan originals which illustrate his duality as a composer of the blues is equal to his effortless playing ability and he flourishes at both efficiently. **Solacium** begins with a relaxing flow on the sextet's attractive melody presentation and the solo arrangement is the same as **Eclypso**. Tommy originally performed this tune two years earlier on the 1957 Prestige album, **Flute Flight** (PRLP 7124) by flutists **Herbie Mann** and **Bobby Jaspar**. On this version, he shows he is creative and assured on the opening statement with phrases that are as smooth as silk. Idrees' trumpet moves efficiently through each verse of the second solo, then John conjures an inspired spell of heart and soul on the next interpretation. The finale by Kenny preceding the closing chorus is superb with his agile fingers supplying plenty of vividly fresh ideas that are maintained by the trio's structurally sound groundwork. **Tommy's Time** ends the album, opening with a slow-paced opening chorus by the ensemble and provides everyone except Hayes the opportunity of giving lengthy statements. Flanagan swings softly with finesse on the first reading, then Burrell picks up the pace exhibiting a fine feeling for the blues on the second solo with intriguing licks. Sulieman takes the next solo spot, turning in a passionately beautiful performance that is full-bodied and says plenty about his versatility in each chorus, then comes Coltrane who applies some improvised creativity on the next reading. Watkins who gets his only



chance to solo on the album steals the show with a mellow tone and gorgeous bass lines which walk firmly and tidies everything up nicely but makes me wish he could have received more solo space.

I was very impressed after listening to both sides of **The Cats** with how natural the record sounded. The instruments come forth from your speakers into your sweet spot with an “in your face” realism. Also, the remastering of Mr. Van Gelder’s original tapes by Victor Musical Industries is mesmerizing and one of the best I’ve heard. So much so, that if you have the system to properly audition it, you’ll want to hear the entire album again, it’s that good. As for the music, **The Cats** will certainly win new fans who may not be familiar with any of the solo albums by **Tommy Flanagan**, **John Coltrane**, **Kenny Burrell**, and **Idrees Sulieman**. It is also a Hard-Bop offering which in my opinion should have been listed under Flanagan’s leadership, but is worth hunting for filling a spot in your jazz library, because each of **The Cats** in this sextet, purrs proudly!

Overseas, Flute Flight – Source: Album liner notes by Ira Gitler

Funny Face, Rosalie, How Long Has This Been Going On? – Source: Wikipedia.org



The Red Mitchell-Harold Land Quintet – Hear Ye!
Atlantic

The simplest thing I can say about this choice from my library is that it’s a first-rate West Coast Hard-Bop session. But rather than tease you with a morsel or taste, I’ll attempt to deliver a full-balanced meal to nourish your jazz appetite, emotions, and senses. **Hear Ye!** (Atlantic 1376) brings together two of the elite masters in the genre, bandleader, double-bassist, composer, lyricist, poet, **Red Mitchell** and bandleader, composer, tenor saxophonist, **Harold Land** as

co-leaders of a quintet including the impressive talents of **Carmell Jones** on trumpet; **Frank Strazzeri** on piano and **Leon Betties** on drums. My copy used for this report is the original 1962 US Mono LP. The album opens with **Triplin’ Awhile**, a medium tempo tune by Land that gives everyone an opportunity to speak individually. The song comes to life with a two-instrument dialogue between Harold and Red on the introduction, ahead of the ensemble who add their instruments to the conversation for the theme. Land is up first and plays with a straightforward drive and energy on the lead statement that has a festive appeal and flavor perfectly suitable for dancing. The two horns fill the gaps with a brief thematic statement, succeeded by Carmell who responds with a performance which is graciously inviting. Frank continues the easy pace with lyrical simplicity, and expressive articulation that sets up a comfortable beat for Red who takes care of business on a jubilant presentation sprinkled with a whole lot of soul and filled with musical excitement. Leon ends the readings with a feisty solo that fits the song like a comfortable glove and is a perfect closer to the opening track.

The tempo goes up for **Rosie’s Spirit**, the first of two compositions by Mitchell which begins with the quintet’s vigorous opening chorus. Carmell stamps his effervescent personality on the first solo with a strikingly bright tone. Red takes over next for a swift statement of invigorating verses, followed by Harold who maintains the intensity with a short soaring workout. Frank creates quite a stir with an aggressive interpretation and Leon takes the final solo, adding the exclamation point with a liveliness which never loses the pulse and builds to a joyful climax. The title tune, also by Mitchell, concludes the first side with a laid-back introduction by Harold and Red that sets the mood for the quintet’s affectionately, medium-paced theme. Land plays the opening statement as if he were playing the blues, unhurried in a softly gentle manner that’s neat and tidy. Jones lays down a good groove that has plenty to say on the next presentation, then Strazzeri takes the next bow, serving up a swinging solo which exhibits his strong chops. Mitchell provides the last word on the final interpretation with a superb, big-toned statement which makes an excellent case for his extraordinary talent as one of the best in the business on bass. **Somara**, Jones’ lone contribution to the album begins the second side smoking from the first note for an uptempo melody ride after the short introduction by the trio. Land launches the opening statement with high-octane velocity and unbridled exhilaration. Mitchell’s turn is next, indicating the emotional power in his playing with a youthful intensity



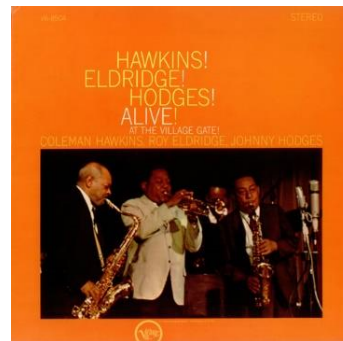
that is strongly evident in each verse. Carmell follows, cooking on several ravenous verses of inexhaustible energy. Strazzeri gets the next nod, bursting into full flame on the next presentation and Betties exchanges a concise reading of incandescent heat with both horns, prior to the closing chorus and finale.

Catacomb is the second original by Harold Land and slows the speed from the previous cooker back to a moderate pace as demonstrated on the ensemble's solid melody presentation. Harold's opening solo is big-toned and loosely swinging, set against the trio's foundation which is happy and lighthearted throughout each individual performance. Red asserts a firm and engaging identity with beautifully layered notes on the second solo which is equally rewarding. Carmell melds each note of the third presentation into a powerful work of creativity and inspiration which flows through each verse effortlessly. Frank follows, painting an aural picture of melodic emotion with rich and mellow hues that are exquisite to hear and eminently disciplined. Leon concludes the readings with a brief presentation that holds together securely until the theme's reprise and subtle climax. The album ends with an uptempo original by Frank Strazzeri titled **Pari Passu**. The torrid tempo of the trio led by Strazzeri begins the introduction that elevates into a sizzling theme treatment with both horns leading the charge. Frank attacks the first solo voraciously, setting the tone of what's to follow. Carmell soars into the second reading with searing heat emanating from his trumpet, then steps aside for Land who delivers a concise performance of rhythmic fury into a lively finale. Red and Leon have a brief word with both horns for a few radiant riffs prior to the closing chorus bringing the curtain down on a very entertaining album by **The Red Mitchell-Harold Land Quintet**.

The sound on **Hear Ye!** is first-rate, capturing the vibrant tone and transparency of each instrument as the group collectively provides a combination of attractive music and great solos led by two masters of the style of music known as Bebop. The quintet only remained together a short time, but the meeting which collectively brought them to record this album is one of the most enjoyable jazz LP's I've heard and would enthusiastically recommend anyone audition. The All Music review by noted author and historian, Scott Yanow states that "this is a fine effort from a group that deserved greater recognition at the time". I couldn't agree with him more and will only add that the verification of his statement can be found in the six selections which make up **Hear Ye!** by **The Red Mitchell-Harold Land Quintet**.

Excerpt by Scott Yanow – Source: AllMusic.com

I'm Old Fashioned, The Way I Feel, Hear Ye! – Source: Discogs.com



Coleman Hawkins-Roy Eldridge-Johnny Hodges – Hawkins! Eldridge! Hodges! Alive! At The Village Gate! Verve Records

I was in the mood to hear a live recording and came across a title which I've not played in a while, but always enjoyed. **Hawkins! Eldridge! Hodges! Alive! At The Village Gate!** (Verve Records V-8504/V6-8504) is one of the smoothest live performances ever recorded with a solid lineup that really needs no introduction. **Roy Eldridge** on trumpet; **Johnny Hodges** on alto sax; **Coleman Hawkins** on tenor sax; **Tommy Flanagan** on piano; **Major Holley** on bass and **Edward Locke** on drums. This album was recorded on August 15, 1962, at the Greenwich Village nightclub. My copy used for this report is the original US Stereo pressing and **Satin Doll** starts the set. The 1953 jazz standard was written by Duke Ellington, Billy Strayhorn and Johnny Mercer who added lyrics after the instrumental became a hit. For those who may not know it, the song is named after a famous black stripper who was the inspiration for the title because it was her stage name.

Satin Doll is one of Ellington's most recorded compositions and a favorite tune for musicians and vocalists over the years in the jazz, pop and even soul genres. The rhythm section establishes the mood gracefully on the introduction, then Eldridge's muted trumpet leads the group through the midtempo opening chorus thoroughly relaxed with a lightly applied beat that sets the tone. His muted opening statement is emotionally disciplined and executed with masterly placed notes. Hodges continues the mellow mood with a model of meaningful simplicity



which is softly expressed. Flanagan, who was an exceptionally gifted and serious craftsman on the piano shows off his chops with a beautifully harmonized interpretation. Hawk counters with flowing statements of beauty which develop nicely on the next performance, then Holley walks his bass with authority on the closing statement, before the sextet's strong culmination.

Perdido by Juan Tizol ends the first side with an uptempo pulsation that gets your foot tapping along from the outset. It was written in 1941 and recorded first by Duke Ellington for a company that leased programming to radio stations but didn't become a hit for the orchestra until their second recording in 1942 on Victor, a multi-genre label which would ultimately become RCA Victor four years later. The jazz standard would also become a hit in 1943 on the pop charts. Lyrics would be added in 1944 by Ervin Drake and Hans Lengsfelder. The sextet turns up the heat on the melody with a lively rendition, followed by Hodges who opens a dialogue of scintillating energy which drives the rhythm section confidently through each verse. Eldridge continues the conversation on the next statement with an equally red-hot presentation. Hawkins steps up next for an enthusiastic performance that comes through your speakers as crisp as the cool December air. Flanagan adds his voice to the discussion with intensity and Holley gets a few final words on an abbreviated reading, expressing happiness preceding the theme's return, finale and appreciative applause by the audience.

The Rabbit In Jazz which occupies the entire second side is a slow-tempo blues by Hodges and Hawkins which gives the front line plenty of space to play. The ensemble begins the song with a solemn melody statement which segues into the lead solo by Hodges' who creates an exquisite performance of elegance from his alto sax. The second reading by Eldridge is as sweet as sugar, and each verse he presents only further enhances the flavor of this succulent dish. Hawkins also delivers a delicate sentiment offering a textbook example of his instrumental virtuosity within the boundaries of the blues. Flanagan ends the readings with a short and sweet interpretation emphasizing his beautiful tone, strong chops while showing his adaptability to every jazz and blues groove. It's a fitting finale to a live set which captures an enticing performance of three giants at their peak.

The men behind the dials are three of the elite engineers in the recording industry; **Frank Greenwald** who worked on many Verve jazz LP's. **Tom Hidley** who is known for his work

on the LP's by Frank Zappa and The Mothers of Invention, and **Val Valentin** who worked on many of the classic Verve and MGM LP's during the sixties, plus other labels including Contemporary, Bethlehem, Tampa, and Pablo. The result of their combined efforts is an excellent recording with a spacious soundstage that is quite impressive and perfectly matched to the musicality exhibited by the sextet on the three selections which encompasses the album. At just shy of forty-minutes, **Hawkins! Eldridge! Hodges! Alive! At The Village Gate** resonates with the kind of deep feeling that only comes from experience, as evident by the three men who make this LP an invaluable addition to your library, **Coleman Hawkins, Roy Eldridge, and Johnny Hodges!**

Frank Greenwald, Tom Hidley, Val Valentin – Source: Discogs.com

Perdido, Satin Doll – Source: JazzStandards.com



The Jeremy Steig Quartet – Flute Fever
Columbia

The word **impossible** as described in the **Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary** is "something that is incapable of being or of occurring". In the annals of music, there have been and are amazing musicians and vocalists which prove the definition incorrect by meeting the challenge of their disabilities head on and in doing so, changing the word impossible to **I'm possible** instead! This choice from my library is by a young man named **Jeremy Steig**, an artist, graphic designer, and musician who began playing the flute at the age of twelve and jazz when he turned fifteen. Four years later at the age of nineteen, he was involved in a motorcycle accident which paralyzed one side of his face and should have, according to the doctors, ended his career as a musician. It didn't, I'm happy to say because he used the paralysis within his mouth to blow air into the flute with



the help of a special blinder-like mouthpiece which he placed inside his cheek, allowing him to play. The debut album he recorded for Columbia Records is titled **Flute Fever** (CS 8936). My copy used in this report is the original 1964 Stereo release, Columbia is at the 12 o'clock position of the two-eye red label with the eyes in white at 3 and 9 o'clock and 360 Sound-Stereo-360 Sound in black at the bottom. An example of his artistic talent appears on the album's front cover and he also did four drawings of the group on the back cover. The other members of **The Jeremy Steig Quartet** are **Denny Zeitlin** on piano; **Ben Tucker** on bass and **Ben Riley** on drums.

The album opens with **Oleo**, the 1954 jazz classic by Sonny Rollins which made its first appearance on the Prestige ten-inch album, **Miles Davis With Sonny Rollins** (PRLP 187), released the same year. Jeremy and Tucker open the song as a duo with a strong rhythmic beat that takes off by leaps and bounds when Denny and Riley join them on the theme. Steig blows vigorously on the opening solo with a hard-swinging interpretation featuring him vocalizing along as each fiery verse unfolds. Denny revs up the short and sweet closing statement with a soaring, vibrant lyricism that is especially exhilarating ahead of the theme's reprise and abrupt climax. **Love Man (Oh, Where Can You Be?)** by Jimmy Davis, Roger Ramirez and James Sherman was written in 1941 for singer-songwriter **Billie Holiday**. Her 1945 78-rpm single for Decca Records (72497) and the 1947 78-rpm single by **Charlie Parker** for Dial Records (D 1022-A) are considered the two pinnacle renditions of this standard with many notable recordings in the jazz, pop and soul genres to its credit. The quartet's version on the LP is a showcase for Zeitlin who provides the song's only solo performance, it's breathtakingly poignant and absolutely gorgeous. In the opening and closing chorus, Jeremy provides two interpretations that are hauntingly elegant with a delicately gentle foundation by the rhythm section.

What Is This Thing Called Love? The Cole Porter standard from the 1930 Broadway musical, **Wake Up and Dream** takes the foursome back to uptempo. From the opening notes of the melody, Jeremy puts his brand on this standard with an invigorating, electrically charged reading. Denny answers the flutist with a propulsive solo that climbs until it reaches its peak preceding the song's captivating conclusion. Miles Davis' iconic standard **So What** from 1959's **Kind of Blue** (Columbia CL 1355/CS 8163) brings the first side to a close with Steig wailing on the theme, then continuing to cook with a lengthy adrenaline-charged opening solo. Zeitlin takes the next reading for a sizzling

uptempo ride, then Tucker swings with a vengeance that's full of joy, not anger on the closer. The quartet takes on one of Thelonious Monk's most famous compositions to begin the second side, **Well You Needn't**. Monk wrote the tune in 1944 and was going to name it after jazz vocalist, **Charlie Beamon**, who upon hearing that replied, "Well, you need not". The song is taken at a medium-fast speed on the quartet's melody presentation. Jeremy steps into the spotlight first, igniting the opening solo with feeling and blazing fire. Denny opens the closing statement with no accompaniment for one chorus, before settling into a gorgeous performance that's a bebopper's dream.

The beautiful 1932 jazz standard **Willow Weep For Me** by Ann Ronell is enchantingly rendered by the quartet with Jeremy's flute communicating her lyrics delicately over a tender accompaniment by the trio that will keep running through your mind long after the song has ended. Denny contributes a brief interlude which is beautifully constructed in between the scrumptious opening and closing melodies by Jeremy into a heart-warming finale. The LP ends with the longest tune on the album, **Blue Seven** by Sonny Rollins. The guys have fun right out of the gate with Steig and Tucker starting with an easy-flowing duet which develops into a bluesy midtempo melody when Zeitlin and Riley join them. Jeremy and Denny have the two lengthiest solos and both men speak effectively during their turns. Tucker follows, keeping the laid-back lyricism intact on the next reading with a rich and full sound shadowed closely by Riley who doesn't solo but contributes neatly-phrased brushwork which is infectiously light-hearted and compliments the soloists very well.

Flutist **Jeremy Steig** is the son of cartoonist **William Steig** whose work appeared in a weekly magazine which began in 1925, **The New Yorker**. Jeremy's father is also the man who created the character **Shrek**, and he played the role of **The Pied Piper** on flute for the 2010 film, **Shrek Forever After**. His Mother, **Elizabeth Mead Steig** is the head of the fine arts department at **Lesley University**, formerly known as Lesley College in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He played mainstream jazz with pianist **Bill Evans** on the 1969 album, **What's New** (Verve Records V6-8777) which was a critical success for both musicians, but Steig became an even greater success in the jazz-rock fusion genre beginning in the seventies, recording a total of twenty-two albums during his career. He lived with his wife **Asako** in Japan and died from cancer in Yokohama on April 13, 2016. Pianist **Denny Zeitlin**, the lone survivor of the quartet, impressed producer **John Hammond** so much with his performance on



Flute Fever, he also produced his debut album on Columbia, **Cathexis** (CL 2182/CS 8982), also released in 1964. He would record three more LP's for the label over the next three years, **Carnival** (CL 2340/CS 9140), the same year; **Shining Hour-Live at The Trident** (CL 2463/CS 9263) in 1966 and **Zeitgeist** (CL 2748/CS 9548) in 1967.

Zeitlin recorded a total of thirty-five albums over his five-decade career as a musician playing with some of the greatest names in jazz. He's currently a clinical professor of psychiatry at the **University of California** in San Francisco, he also has a private practice there and in Marin County. Bassist **Ben Tucker** has a very lengthy resume of the albums he's appeared on and the musicians he's played with. He worked with **The Dave Bailey Quintet** in 1961 and composed the song **Comin' Home Baby** which became a huge instrumental hit for Bailey on his album, **2 Feet In The Gutter** (Epic LA 16021/BA 17021) and flutist **Herbie Mann** who recorded it for his 1962 Atlantic LP, **Herbie Mann at The Village Gate** (1380/SD 1380). He owned two stations in his hometown of Savannah, Georgia, WSOK-AM and WLVA-FM. He would die in a traffic collision in Hutchinson Island, Georgia on June 4, 2013! It might be easier to tell you who drummer **Ben Riley** hasn't played with because his list of recordings is also enormous. He is most notably known as the drummer in **The Thelonious Monk Quartet**. During the seventies, he was also a member of **The New York Quartet** and in the group **Sphere** alongside his colleague in Monk's group, tenor saxophonist **Charlie Rouse**. He lived until the age of eighty-four, passing away in West Islip, New York on November 18, 2017. The album was produced by **John Hammond** but gives no other information on the recording engineer. However, the sound quality is excellent with a superb soundstage for each of the instruments. If you're a fan of jazz flute, Modal or Post-Bop, I submit for your consideration, **Flute Fever** by **The Jeremy Steig Quartet**. It's one illness, you won't mind catching and requires only one listen to make you feel much better!

Miles Davis and The Modern Jazz Giants, Miles Davis With Sonny Rollins, 2 Feet In The Gutter, Comin' Home Baby, Herbie Mann at The Village Gate, Cathexis, Carnival, Shining Hour-Live at The Trident – Source: Discogs.com

Oleo, Well You Needn't, What Is This Thing Called Love – Source: JazzStandards.com

Wake Up and Dream, Willow Weep For Me, Jeremy Steig, William Steig, Elizabeth Mead Steig, Denny Zeitlin, Ben

Tucker, Ben Riley, Shrek, Shrek Forever After, The Thelonious Monk Quartet, The New York Quartet, Sphere, John Hammond – Source: Wikipedia.org