

Cliff Jordan & John Gilmore – Blowing In From Chicago
Blue Note

As a youngster, one of the things I learned was that jazz is one of the most passionate and proactive arts in all of music. The spontaneity of a “**blowing session**” or “**jam session**” are the best examples of jazz improvisation because the musicians control the flow of musical ideas moment to moment in each impromptu performance and are characterized, shaped and presented fresh and new. Usually, the best place this happens is in front of a live audience at a club, concert or at a jazz festival. But sometimes, that enthusiasm, exuberance, and freedom are captured in a studio session. This morning’s choice from my library is an excellent LP from 1957 by two tenor saxophonists who over the course of their careers made significant impressions in jazz, **Clifford Jordan** and **John Gilmore**. Their only album as co-leaders is titled **Blowing In From Chicago** (Blue Note BLP 1549) and the quintet is augmented by a superb rhythm section consisting of **Horace Silver** on piano; **Curly Russell** on bass and **Art Blakey** on drums. My copy used in this report is the 1983 French Mono reissue by **Pathé Marconi-EMI** and before I go any further, let me state that this is not a DMM (Digital Metal Mastering) pressing which has been known to be hit or miss, sound wise.

The album opens with **Status Quo**, a lively tune by tenor saxophonist John Neely with both horns leading the charge through the uptempo melody. John rips into the opening solo slicing through each verse like a sharp blade aggressively. Clifford joins him next in a short exchange, then takes off with a supercharged reading which moves like a car speeding down the expressway. Horace shifts into high gear with a blazing swiftness that’s equally scintillating. Art engages in a concise conversation with both horns, then

brings the solos to close with a blazing performance illustrating his incomparable artistry preceding the quintet’s end theme and quick stop. The first of two originals by Jordan follows, **Bo-Till** slows the tempo to a laid-back pace with a Latin flavor. The quintet states the theme collectively after a short introduction by the trio, stepping aside for Jordan who makes a profound impression on the first solo with a beautifully conceived statement which displays a marvelous tone throughout. Silver gets into the groove next with an exceptional reading that’s cool, smooth and sophisticated. Gilmore delivers the closing choruses of the song proficiently with meticulous execution. Blakey constructs a concise comment during the ensemble’s end theme and close.

The first side finale is **Blue Lights** by Gigi Gryce, a catchy tune which opens with the quintet laying down a gorgeous medium beat on the theme and everyone gets a solo opportunity. John steps into the spotlight first with a debonair performance that’s one of his strongest on the album and absolutely marvelous. Horace follows, moving through each verse comfortably with notes of undeniable pleasure that’s an ear pleaser. Clifford weaves his way through the next musical improvisation with astounding dexterity. Curly puts together a condensed reading that walks for one chorus with strong bass lines and Art breezes into a succinct interpretation which culminates into a splendid summation of the first side. The second side gets underway with Charlie Parker’s 1945 bebop classic, **Billie’s Bounce** which gives everyone except Russell a lengthy solo canvas in which to work. Blakey begins with a high-voltage introduction which sets the pace for the fiery quintet theme statement which follows. Clifford packs a mighty punch on the lead solo with an aggressive showcase, followed by John who gives a fierce interpretation of extremely hot choruses. Horace takes over next for a lively performance that takes his piano on a sizzling uptempo ride. Both horns exchange a few riffs with Art before the drummer gives an unaccompanied propulsive exhibition into the coda.

Clifford’s second original on the album is a blues titled **Evil Eye** and eases the throttle back from the previous burner to a moderate pace which begins with a collective melody presentation by the quintet. Jordan opens the solos with a series of phrases that are well-structured. Gilmore shows he is also capable of interpreting the blues with plenty of soul on the next presentation. Silver delivers a frivolously swinging performance which expresses pleasure. Both horns return to take turns sharing a few more thoughts, then Blakey makes a short statement preceding the



theme's reprise. The album's final track is **Everywhere**, a midtempo original by Horace Silver which I believe made its debut on this album. It opens with a casual opening melody by the ensemble in unison and the solo order is Gilmore, Jordan, Silver, and Blakey. John takes the stage first with a bewitchingly delightful opening statement, then Clifford makes his case with a captivating contribution which moves sprightly along off the drive of the rhythm section. Horace takes over next, communicating his points well with a pronounced beat and the final solo goes to Art who puts the joyous exclamation point on the song and album with a compelling statement that marks the end of this enjoyable album.

Clifford Jordan would record a total of three albums for **Blue Note**, the other two LP's are **Cliff Jordan** (BLP 1565) and **Cliff Craft** (BLP 1582) which I reviewed in the April 2018 column. He played and recorded with the elite musicians of jazz including **Paul Chambers, Sonny Clark, Richard Davis, Eric Dolphy, Art Farmer, Dizzy Gillespie, Andrew Hill, J.J. Johnson, Carmen McRae, Charles Mingus, Lee Morgan, and Max Roach**. He also enjoyed success recording as a leader for **Atlantic, Bee Hive, Candid, Criss Cross, Jazzland, Mapleshade, Muse, Riverside, Soul Note, SteepleChase, Strata-East** and **Vortex** and his discography as a leader and sideman is extensive and, in my opinion, well worth investigating. He remained in demand over the next three decades and toured around the world. His final album was a 1992 live recording at **Condon's** in **New York City** for **Milestone**, where he performed with his big band, **Down Through The Years** (MCD-9197-2). He lost his battle against lung cancer on March 27, 1993, at the age of sixty-one.

Blowing In From Chicago was **John Gilmore's** only recording on **Alfred Lion's** label, **Blue Note**. He began playing the clarinet since the age of fourteen, then pursued a musical career after a four-year stint in the United States Air Force where he took up and played the tenor saxophone. He began what would become a forty-year stint with jazz bandleader, composer, piano and synthesizer player, **Sun Ra** in 1953 who with his group, **Sun Ra Arkestra** recorded with **A&M, Black Saint, El Saturn Records, ESP-Disk, Impulse, Leo, MPS, Rounder** and **Thoth Intergalactic**. During this time, Gilmore also toured with **The Jazz Messengers** and recorded with **Paul Bley, Andrew Hill, Pete LaRoca, McCoy Tyner** and **Dizzy Reece**. After Sun Ra's death on **May 30, 1993**, Gilmore led the Arkestra for two years before his own death from emphysema on **August 20, 1995**, at the age of sixty-three.

As for the music on **Blowing In From Chicago**, it's fantastic as are the solos on each track and the sound quality of this reissue is exemplary. The instruments deliver an excellent soundstage throughout the treble, midrange and bass that places your sweet spot in the studio with the musicians. It's definitely a cut above the average debut album, and a title I recommend as a terrific addition to any jazzophile's library, particularly if you're a Hard-Bop fan or love a good **"blowing session"** or **"jam session"**. In 1994, **Blowing In From Chicago** was reissued as a 180-gram audiophile LP as part of **The Blue Note Connoisseur Series** which was mastered at **Record Technology Incorporated** and is currently out of print. As of this writing, there are two reissues currently in print, the first is the 2010 **Analogue Productions** 45-rpm two-record set (AP-1549) which is a limited-edition numbered pressing which I've heard is stunning. The other is a 33 1/3-rpm reissue (BN-1549) released by **Scorpio Music** which came out sometime between 2010 and 2012. I do not recommend these LP's at all because the sound quality of some of their pressings is atrocious. You can tell their records by the address at the bottom of the back cover, **Blue Note Records, 304 Park Avenue South!**

Billie's Bounce – Source: JazzStandards.com

Clifford Jordan, John Gilmore – Source: Wikipedia.org



Sonny Criss – Intermession Riff
Pablo Records

In 1951, producer **Norman Granz**, the founder of **Clef Records, Norgran Records, Down Home Records, Verve Records, Pablo Records** and the chief architect behind the **Jazz at The Philharmonic** concerts presented a tour that began on the west coast featuring jazz and pop vocalist **Billy Eckstine** performing at the **Shrine Auditorium** in Los Angeles, California. During the intermission, an all-star



septet led by alto saxophonist **William "Sonny" Criss** who was traveling with Eckstine took the stage and provided the audience with a brief instrumental set of their own. The other members of the group are **Joe Newman** on trumpet; **Bennie Green** on trombone; **Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis** on tenor sax; **Bobby Tucker** on piano; **Tommy Potter** on bass and **Kenny Clarke** on drums. The result of their performance is the album I'm discussing from the library, **Intermission Riff** (Pablo Records 2310-929), released thirty-seven years later in 1988 after archivist and future jazz record producer Eric Miller discovered the tapes of the concert on a shelf in a storeroom the year before. My copy used for this week's report is the 1988 Mono LP and only pressing released on vinyl.

The title song, **Intermission Riff** opens their set, it was written by Ray Wetzel who was a member of **The Stan Kenton Orchestra** at the time and Michael H. Goldsen, a composer and giant in the world of music publishing. This 1946 composition would usually feature solos by the alto and tenor saxes, or occasionally the trumpet and trombones in the brass section of Kenton's band made its debut as a 78-rpm single (298) on Capitol Records. The septet's rendition is perfect for a jam session and the group obliges with a robust introduction by Davis and vigorous melody. Davis gets into some heavy cooking on the opening statement with immense lyricism propelled by his colleagues' verbal and instrumental encouragement as his solo unfolds. Newman enters next, continuing the spirited mood by converting his ideas of musical extension into very exciting music on the next performance. Criss follows, giving an electrifying presentation, revealing a musical maturity beyond his youth that receives a huge ovation from the audience at its climax. Green puts an exclamation point on this upbeat cooker with an exhilarating statement that leads to a thrilling conclusion.

How High The Moon, the 1940 jazz standard by Nancy Hamilton and Morgan Lewis began life on Broadway in the revue, **Two For The Show**. This timeless standard has been recorded numerous times as a vocal and instrumental by Benny Goodman, June Christy, Stan Kenton, and Les Paul to name a few. It also became an integral part of the concert performances of **Ella Fitzgerald** and **The JATP All-Stars**. Ella first sang it at Carnegie Hall in 1947 and recorded it as a 78-rpm single (24387) in 1947 and 45-rpm (9-24387) in 1948 for Decca Records, and would later feature it again in 1960 on the album, **Ella In Berlin** (Verve Records MG V-4041/V6-4041), after which it became her signature song until her death in 1996. The trio starts the song with a calypso flavor

during the song's introduction, the horns join in to pronounce the melody gradually building to a high-spirited pace. Newman offers a strong beat on the first reading to start things off. Davis steps up and tells his story next with a mellow presentation then Potter takes his first chance to solo with a fluent reading that's impressive. Green exhibits his technical skill with a jubilant performance, then Criss takes the spotlight last, cooking comfortably with passionate enthusiasm that earns him a large ovation from the crowd.

A rocking version of the 1941 jazz standard **Perdido** by Juan Tizol opens the second side, giving everyone a chance to offer lengthy statements highlighting their individual virtuosity. In Spanish, Perdido means lost and the song refers to the street in New Orleans. The song was first recorded by Duke Ellington, the same year and has been recorded as a vocal and instrumental by some of the greatest names in jazz. The JATP All-Stars also featured the standard regularly during their concerts in the late forties and fifties. Lyrics were added to Perdido in 1944 by Ervin Drake and Hans Lengsfelder. The septet opens with a vigorous theme treatment, then Criss opens the soloing with an exciting performance which makes a strong impression.

Newman's trumpet is contagiously swinging on the second reading, then Tucker takes over for an electrically charged interpretation, showing confidence in each verse. Davis tears into the next interpretation with impeccable intonation and unrestrained fervor, followed by Green who enters the next solo with a vengeance, exhibiting each note with mesmerizing perseverance. The septet comes together for one chorus in unison, then Clarke closes with an exhilarating performance into the reprise and close.

One of my favorite standards, **Body, and Soul** by Johnny Green, Edward Heyman, Robert Sour, and Frank Eyton is up next. This timeless standard was written 1930 and the list of musicians and vocalists who've recorded it could be one book of **The Encyclopedia Britannica of Jazz and Pop**. The song begins with a very soothing introduction led by Green, revealing a graceful mood on the lead solo with a humorous comment by Davis as the pace moves to midtempo. Newman, Tucker, Criss, and Davis all contribute solos that are concise but expressed very well. The finale is **High Jump** by E. Greene culminates the joyous exuberance by the ensemble in a blowing session at a speed as fast as the Road Runner. The soloists are Bernie, Sonny, Joe, Eddie, and Kenny in that order and Green speaks his piece first with the



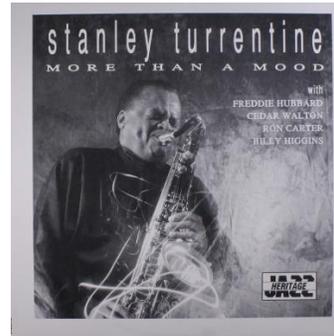
added horsepower of the other horns who chase through one chorus. This is repeated on each of the remaining interpretations by the front line and Criss meets the challenge on the second statement with vivacious improvising on a vigorously rapid performance that's even faster than Green's. Newman continues the aggressively expedient pace next with a marvelous reading that dares the rhythm section to keep up with him on each phrase. Davis infuses his performance with a few bars of the US Air Force anthem, **Wild Blue Yonder** during the next driving while exchanging a few short thoughts with Clarke who ends the solos in explosive form preceding the theme's return and ending.

In his liner notes, **Eric Miller** states the music has a few instances of momentary sound dropouts, but because he thought the music was too important to be edited, he didn't attempt to remove them. Intermission Riff was originally mastered by **George Horn** (whose company **George Horn Mastering** is still working on many reissues and new releases today) and digitally remixed by **Danny Kopelson** of **Fantasy Studios** in Berkeley, California. The album gives a glimpse of alto saxophonist Sonny Criss who possessed a beauty and grandeur in his sound which was capable of creating logical or emotional solos. He had much to offer the jazz world with seemingly inexhaustible energy or velvety smoothness when playing that made for some fine performances on his albums for Imperial, Impulse, Muse Peacock, Prestige and Xanadu. In 1977, he was diagnosed with stomach cancer and on November 19th, a few days before he was scheduled to begin a tour in Japan, would take his own life as a result of the constant pain. It's my hope that having read this report, you'll seek out **Intermission Riff** for a spot in your jazz library whether you're just discovering his music or are already familiar with **Sonny Criss**. It's an LP that does for the listener what a live album should do best, make you wish, you'd been there!

Ella In Berlin, George Horn, George Horn Mastering, Eric Miller – Source: Discogs.com

Body and Soul, How High The Moon, Perdido – Source: JazzStandards.com

Sonny Criss – Source: Wikipedia.org



Stanley Turrentine – More Than A Mood
Jazz Heritage

After the enormous success of **Sugar** (CTI Records CTI 6005) in 1971, **Stanley Turrentine** began recording a series of LP's that the purists would classify as Smooth Jazz or Jazz-Funk. After two decades, he returned to his Bop roots with the first of three CD-albums for the **MusicMasters Jazz** label. This choice from the library was one of two that were released as LP's. **More Than A Mood** (Jazz Heritage 913307A), released in 1993 has a fine feel like one of the sixties Blue Note LP's Stanley recorded during his decade there. Here, he's matched with a world-class quartet supporting him for this session, **Freddie Hubbard** on trumpet and flugelhorn; **Cedar Walton** on piano; **Ron Carter** on bass and **Billy Higgins** on drums. **Thomasville** composed by Stanley's brother Tommy Turrentine kicks off the first side at an invigorating beat with the rhythm section fueling the front line's delivery on the melody. Stanley solos first, his tenor sax reaching a height of spontaneous excitement as he drives the trio through each chorus. Freddie maintains an identical groove on the next reading with a scintillating performance, then Cedar enters next with a highly rhythmic interpretation. Billy enters the spotlight last, showing the master craftsman he is on the drums with a brief performance of vigorous enthusiasm ahead of the out-chorus.

The 1937 popular song **They Can't Take That Away From Me** by George and Ira Gershwin made its first appearance in the musical comedy, *Shall We Dance* that year. This ageless evergreen opens with a straight-ahead showcase by the quartet with the solo duties shared by Turrentine and Walton anchored by Carter and Higgins who provide a rock steady foundation behind both soloists. Stanley starts the soloing with a splendid presentation of blues-flavored, soulful jazz, then comes Cedar who delivers a direct, simple and sincere reading preceding the theme's return and soft



summation. The immortal jazz standard **In A Sentimental Mood** by Duke Ellington, Irving Mills, and Manny Kurtz was written in 1935 and is one of the most recorded compositions in the genres of jazz and pop. A brief solo introduction by Cedar opens the way for Stanley's richly toned, delicately gentle melody. The saxophonist's ensuing opening statement is a very personal interpretation that's warm and softly serene while Cedar provides a beautiful example of interpreting a ballad with an elegant performance. Stanley makes a final few comments that are a marvel to behold leading to the thoughtfully polite coda.

Easy Walker by Billy Taylor and Teddy Castion ends the first side with the quartet moving back to midtempo. Stanley originally recorded this song as the title tune on his 1968 Blue Note album (BST 84268) and the trio opens with a brief introductory performance, segueing into an air of easy assurance by Turrentine's melody. Stanley blows with authority on the first solo, emphasizing the joy and cheerfulness in each verse. Cedar comes next with a delightful reading possessing an attractive tone and a firm timbre. Billy takes care of business on the final solo with an assertive expression leading to the coda and climax. The Bossa Nova song **Triste** by Antônio Carlos Jobim starts the second side. Jobim wrote the music and lyrics for it in 1966 and the title means "Sad" in English. Jobim first recorded the song on his 1967 album, **Wave** (A&M Records SP-3002) and it's one of his best-known and recorded compositions. The quartet's version is taken at a livelier tempo than his 1967 album, opening and closing with two festive choruses. In between, there are two meticulously executed interpretations by Turrentine and Walton sustained by the gorgeous groundwork of Carter and Higgins.

Pieces of Dreams by Alan Bergman, Marilyn Bergman, and Michel Legrand is the title tune from Stanley's 1974 album (Fantasy F-9465). After a short introduction by the trio, Stanley brings out the sound of innocence with a gracefully light melody and lead solo of pretty thoughts, images, and emotions. Cedar's closing performance develops nicely into a strong and sure presentation which wraps up with the closing coda and happy ending. **Spirits Up Above** by Rahsaan Roland Kirk brings back Freddie Hubbard to the group showcasing his flugelhorn at its most beguiling. The opening chorus flows with the warm mellow tones of both horns delivering a gentle message over the rhythm section. Turrentine is up first to solo and the saxophonist crafts a deeply emotional reading. Walton contributes an evocative, gentle performance next and Hubbard infuses

the final statement with sentimental warmth and intimacy preceding Stanley's closing coda and poetic fadeout.

The title tune, **More Than A Mood** by Frank Marino and Bill Simon brings the album to a close with a slow tempo that gives Stanley the solo showcase alone. The trio is relaxed as the theme proceeds and Turrentine responds to that intimate, relaxed feeling with a sultry statement that's one of his most strikingly beautiful ballad performances, leading to the sensuous end theme and tender fadeout. The album was recorded by **Jimmy Douglass** who learned his craft from one of the best in the business, **Tom Dowd**. Douglass' wonderful work has appeared on many albums in the hip-hop, jazz, rock, and soul genres since the seventies and is the owner of **The Magic Mix Room**. The sound quality is the equal of the MusicMasters CD-album (01612-65079-2), released in 1992 with a solid soundstage through the treble, midrange and low-end. Sadly, **Jazz Heritage**, the record label no longer exists, so the album may be difficult to find, but is worth it if you're looking for an LP which recaptures the spirit of Turrentine's Hard-Bop and Soul-Jazz records on **Blue Note** and **CTI Records**. The music on **More Than A Mood** carries on the swinging jazz tradition **Stanley Turrentine** was known for throughout his forty-year career that is sure to please newcomers to his music as well as seasoned fans! Just one more thing, in my best Columbo impression, the song **Triste** heard here written by Jobim is not the same one heard on the 1961 Verve album, **In a Latin Bag** (V-8419/V6-8419) by **Cal Tjader**, that tune was written by Mr. Tjader.

Jimmy Douglass, Tom Dowd, Cal Tjader, In a Latin Bag – Source: Discogs.com

They Can't Take That Away From Me, Shall We Dance, In A Sentimental Mood – Source: JazzStandards.com

Antônio Carlos Jobim, Triste – Source: Wikipedia.org



Grant Green – Green Street
Music Matters Jazz

I begin this final entry for June with **Grant Green** who steps into the spotlight on his second of four albums released in 1961. He was one of the most uniquely interesting guitarists in jazz, possessing a gorgeous tone, speed of execution and a distinctive lyricism in his playing which proved remarkably durable and always pleased his critics, fans, and peers throughout his career, but particularly during his time at **Blue Note**. **Green Street** (Blue Note BST 84071) is a trio album like his debut for the label, **Grant's First Stand** (BLP 4064/BST 84064). However, here the guitarist takes a different path than the usual organ/guitar/drums trio or a larger group featuring horns, a piano or vibes to augment the rhythm section on later albums. His colleagues here are **Ben Tucker** on bass and **Dave Bailey** on drums. Both men provide a perfect backdrop for Grant to communicate a swinging style of jazz to the listener with rhythmic precision and finesse throughout the five-song set. My copy used in this report is the 2015 **Music Matters** Stereo audiophile reissue (MMBST-84071 – BST-84071).

The first stop, **No. 1 Green Street** is a midtempo blues by the guitarist that kicks off with the trio presenting the lyrically catchy theme in unison. Grant takes over for the song's only solo, giving him the space to build an engaging statement that's an ear pleaser with Ben and Dave pacing themselves behind him throughout his interpretation. **'Round About Midnight** by Bernie Hanighen, Thelonious Monk, Cootie Williams opens with a delicately tender theme statement by the trio that continues with an elegantly graceful showcase by the guitarist backed by the gentle groundwork by Tucker and Bailey into a touching ending. Green's second composition, **Grant's Dimensions**

ends the first side with high-spirited energy that allows Ben and Dave their first solo opportunity. The guitarist crafts a marvelous improvisation which drives the rhythm through each verse firmly. Ben turns in a fine performance next with a bouncy bass interpretation that flows steadily into Dave's impressive exchange with Green and Tucker ahead of the out-chorus.

Green With Envy, the third original by the guitarist leads off the second side and is the longest track on the album affording each member a chance to speak individually with Green receiving the longest presentation. After a vivacious melody by the trio, Grant delivers one of his most creative interpretations on the first solo into a satisfying summation, that's well worth hearing. Ben is up next, carefully selecting and bending his notes into an excellent reading with feeling. Bailey participates in an aggressive exchange with Green and Tucker for the final performance with a youthful intensity which leads to a superb end theme. **Alone Together** by Arthur Schwartz and Howard Dietz was written in 1932 and first sung by vocalist **Jean Sargent** in the Broadway musical, **Flying Colors** that year. It's the duo's most recorded composition with many prominent vocal and instrumental versions. The trio's rendition of this timeless jazz standard lowers the temperature by a few degrees, opening with a subdued introduction and theme statement that evolves into a virtuoso lead solo by Grant punctuated by the inspired foundation from Ben and Dave. The bassist provides a walking bass line on the final reading that's so clearly expressed and well-defined, it swings smoothly into the theme's reprise and slow fade.

Anyone who's heard or owns a **Music Matters Jazz** reissue knows of the attention to the music through their remastering of the original tapes by **Rudy Van Gelder**, the gatefold photos which are amazing, the covers themselves which are worthy enough to hang as album art in your listening room and the meticulous pressing by RTI. I listened to **Green Street** after hearing my 1995 **Blue Note Connoisseur Series** Stereo reissue (B1-32088), using it for comparison since both are 180-gram audiophile reissues. I was impressed by the Connoisseur LP's sound quality; the detail of the instruments are clearly defined. In my opinion, it's one of the best-remastered albums I've ever heard from that series by **Capitol Records**. However, when the stylus dropped on the MMJ 33 1/3 reissue, I discovered an extraordinary soundstage across the treble, midrange and bass spectrum that's absolutely mind-blowing. In fact, there's only one error on the LP, it appears on the second side label of this copy. Track two is incorrectly listed as the



1937 song, **Where Are You?** by Jimmy McHugh and Harold Adamson. That tiny issue aside, on your next record hunt, especially if you're a fan of jazz guitar by **Kenny Burrell, Pat Martino, Wes Montgomery, Jimmy Raney, and Joe Pass**, I enthusiastically invite you to take a trip to **Green Street**. There you will find a jazz album that's a real pleasure to listen to and sounds just as fresh today as it was when released sixty-eight years ago by one of the elite guitarists of Hard-Bop, **Grant Green** at the peak of his creativity!

'Round About Midnight, Alone Together – Source: JazzStandards.com