

Tsuyoshi Yamamoto Trio – Midnight Sugar  
Three Blind Mice

The album I've chosen to begin the month of November is one of my absolute favorites, not only because of the great music within the cover but each time I hear it, I'm transported back to one of my happiest memories as a young adult. For any of you who lived in Cleveland, Ohio during the seventies and eighties, Audio Craft at 3915 Carnegie Avenue was the place to go if you wanted to purchase a quality entry-level, mid-level or high-end audio system. My uncle Bob Franks was the manager there for many years and I got to help him on Monday and Thursday evenings, and all-day Saturday. He was instrumental in teaching me about excellent audio equipment, helping me put together my first system and introducing me to the music of the Tsuyoshi Yamamoto Trio.

Midnight Sugar (Three Blind Mice TBM-23) is the group's debut album for the Japanese jazz label and has long been a favorite to demonstrate high-end audio equipment at audio shows and audio salons worldwide. It's also become a collector's item, a mint original LP or one of the 1977, 1979 and 1982 Japanese Stereo reissues can cost a few hundred dollars. Joining the pianist are two giants in their own right, Isoo Fukui on bass and Tetsujiro Obara on drums. My copy used for this report is the 1977 Japanese Stereo reissue (TBM-2523) and LP collectors take note, only the 1977, 1979 (TBM(P)-2523) and 1982 (Trio Records-Three Blind Mice PAP-2006) reissues lists the group's name as Tsuyoshi Yamamoto Trio. All other LP reissues including the original 1974 release show the pianist's last name first.

The first side opens with the title tune, Midnight Sugar is a slow tempo blues which begins with a brief bowed bass introduction by Isoo before Tsuyoshi takes the lead during the melody. Yamamoto is the only soloist and is at his best on a lengthy interpretation that is sublimely soulful and one of the highlights on the

album, thanks to the rhythmic harmony provided by his colleagues. I'm A Fool To Want You was written in 1951 by Frank Sinatra, Jack Wolf, and Joel Herron and has been recorded numerous times as a jazz and pop standard. Sinatra who co-wrote the lyrics recorded the song for Columbia Records as a 78-rpm single (39425) and it became a hit. The song opens with a gracefully moving introduction by Tsuyoshi that becomes a set of elegant splendor as the tender theme is presented. The pace moves to midtempo on the pianist's solo performance and he responds with a well-structured interpretation revealing a remarkable emotional depth and spontaneity preceding the close which ends with fingertip delicacy.

The Nearness of You starts the second side and was written in 1937 by Hoagy Carmichael and Ned Washington, becoming a hit for vocalist Ray Eberle who recorded it with The Glenn Miller Orchestra for Bluebird (B-10745) in 1940. The trio dresses up this old favorite with a blissful midtempo theme and a sentimental swing on the song's only interpretation by Yamamoto that draws the listener into this beautiful standard with cheerfully articulate notes and a steady sureness from the inspired bass and brushwork of Fukui and Obara. It Could Happen To You comes from the pen of Jimmy Van Heusen and Johnny Burke, this popular song was written in 1943 and was first recorded by vocalist Jo Stafford for Capitol Records (158) with the Paul Weston Orchestra, becoming a hit the following year. It made its first film appearance also in the 1944 musical comedy, And The Angels Sing and is one of the timeless songs from The Great American Songbook with many notable vocal and instrumental recordings. The interaction between the trio here is stunning as they introduce the dreamy melody. Tsuyoshi's reading is thoughtfully gentle, revealing his tender side on one of the most hauntingly beautiful ballads ever written as he navigates sweetly through each verse.

The album ends with Yamamoto's Sweet Georgia Blues, an uptempo original that shares some similarities with the 1925 jazz and pop classic, Sweet Georgia Brown by Ben Bernie, Ken Casey and Maceo Pinkard. It opens with a vivacious theme statement, then next for a brief comment preceding Obara who also gives a short workout of explosive fireworks, then Tsuyoshi wraps up the album with a few final remarks of fun that leads to the lively closing chorus and finale. Three Blind Mice, the Japanese jazz label began in 1970 with the premise of showcasing emerging jazz artists. The label produced one-hundred thirty albums



over a thirty-four year period and was known for their outstanding sound. TBM also was instrumental in the development of Japanese jazz. Many of the stars from Japan now known around the world recorded their debut albums on the label. The album was produced by Takeshi Fujii who ran TBM for many years and recorded by Yoshihiko Kannari, the distinguished Japanese engineer who worked for TBM at the time, and now runs his own organization, Studio Lion since 2000.

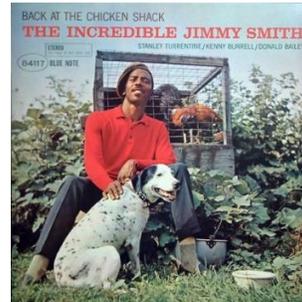
The sound on *Midnight Sugar* is spectacular and a perfect choice to demonstrate any mid-level or high-end audio system. You'll feel, your sweet spot is right in the studio with the musicians because of the incredible detail that comes from the lifelike sound of the piano, bass, and drums. Tsuyoshi Yamamoto has an incredible discography of music, is still performing today and all of his albums on Three Blind Mice are worthy of occupying a place in your library. If you're looking for a jazz trio album for the library or are a fan of piano jazz specifically, I heartily recommend and happily submit for your approval, *Midnight Sugar* by the Tsuyoshi Yamamoto Trio. An album that's quite a value for the music heard the quality of sound and a title that will provide its owner many hours of true listening pleasure.

My first audio system from Audio Craft, a Tandberg TR2075 Receiver, a Yamaha YP-6 Manual Direct Drive Turntable with a Shure M95 Cartridge, Nakamichi 480 and 582 Cassette Decks, and a large pair of Advent Loudspeakers.

Takeshi Fujii, Yoshihiko Kannari, Studio Lion – Source: Discogs.com

The Nearness of You, Ray Eberle, The Glenn Miller Orchestra, It Could Happen To You, And The Angels Sing, Jo Stafford, The Paul Weston Orchestra – Source: JazzStandards.com

I'm A Fool To Want You, Sweet Georgia Brown, Three Blind Mice – Source: Wikipedia.org



Jimmy Smith – Back At The Chicken Shack  
Analogue Productions

Up next from the library is one of my favorite albums by The Incredible Jimmy Smith. *Back At The Chicken Shack* (BLP 4117) is the companion to *Midnight Special* (BLP 4078/BST 84078) that I reviewed November 2019. It was recorded at the same time, but not released until 1963, one year after Smith left Blue Note to record for Verve Records. Joining the organist again is Stanley Turrentine on tenor sax; Kenny Burrell on guitar; Donald Bailey on drums and the copies used in this report is the Analogue Productions 45-rpm two record Stereo audiophile limited edition reissue (AP-84117), released in 2010 and my 1985 US Cadre Rouge Audiophile Edition DMM Stereo reissue (BST 84117) by EMI France. The first side opens with the title tune, *Back At The Chicken Shack* would become a monster hit for Jimmy and Blue Note. It also has become a contemporary jazz and blues standard and is listed in the book, *1001 Albums You Must Hear Before You Die* by Robert Dimery and Michael Lydon. The trio starts this blues journey off with a slow-paced stroll through the first chorus with Smith leading the trio, Stanley joins them on the second chorus, repeating the theme with singing lyricism from his tenor sax. The leader opens with a bluesy lead solo that's sweet as syrup on pancakes, followed by Kenny who effectively compliments the organ with an impassioned reading possessing great depth and feeling. Stanley takes over for the closer, ending with a soft, sophisticated swing that leads to the reprise by the foursome into a slow fadeout.

The quartet begins the second side with the 1934 song, *When I Grow Too Old To Dream* by Sigmund Romberg and Oscar Hammerstein II. It was first heard in the 1935 film, *The Night Is Young*, later becoming a pop standard with several noteworthy recordings by Nat King Cole, Bing Crosby, Gracie Fields, Stéphane Grappelli, Julie London, The Everly Brothers, and



Linda Ronstadt. Taken at midtempo, the foursome's rendition of this chestnut is a showcase performance for Stanley Turrentine who turns in a marvelous interpretation prior to Jimmy who makes a brief comment ahead of the closing coda. The tempo moves up to start the second record with an original by Turrentine, titled Minor Chant. He first performed this tune on his 1960 Blue Note debut album, Look Out! (BLP 4039/BST 84039). Stanley's opening statement is an irresistible groove that will make the listener feel right at home, featuring a concise quote from Frédéric Chopin's Piano Sonata No. 2 in B-flat minor, Op. 35 that's also known as The Funeral March. Jimmy takes charge next with an invigorating performance that hits its mark impressively, and drummer Donald Bailey shares his only solo on the album with Stanley for a few short remarks that show off his fine brushwork. Smith's midtempo original Messy Bessie brings the album to a close on the final side with a happy, easy-flowing beat by the leader and rhythm on the melody and out-chorus. Stanley opens and ends the soloing with some down-home cooking. Kenny follows Turrentine's first reading, adding to the meal with a swinging interpretation, then Jimmy sails into the next performance, adding the final ingredients of verve and vitality that completes this tasty dish of the blues.

I used my 1985 Cadre Rouge Audiophile Edition of Back At The Chicken Shack as a comparison to my MMJ reissue. It's one of the few Digital Metal Mastering reissues possessing a gorgeous soundstage throughout the treble, midrange, and bass spectrum placing the listener's sweet spot in the center surrounded by the quartet's instruments. However, the remastering by Kevin Gray and Steve Hoffman is absolutely amazing with a brilliant sound that's light years away from the DMM reissue. Like its companion Midnight Special, Back At The Chicken Shack is an excellent way to experience the full scope of his artistry as a bandleader, composer, and musician. It showcases Jimmy Smith at the height of his powers during his time at Blue Note. If you're in the mood for some Soul-Jazz and are a fan of jazz organ, Back At The Chicken Shack is a great introduction to Jimmy's music and the genre. It's also a title worth seeking out for a spot in any jazz library!

Frédéric Chopin's Piano Sonata No. 2 in B-flat minor, Op. 35, When I Grow Too Old To Dream – Source: Wikipedia.org



Charles Earland – Third Degree Burn Milestone

Organist Charles Earland may not have been the first jazz musician to make the Hammond B3 Organ swing, but there's little doubt that whenever he recorded or performed live, he played his instrument with a distinctive blend of explosive and punchy rhythms that became his trademark, earning him the nickname, The Mighty Burner. A perfect example of this can be found on the next album up for discussion. Third Degree Burn (Milestone M-9174) is an album of Soul-Jazz that finds the leader in the company of an awesome front line and great rhythm section. Lew Soloff on trumpet; David Newman, Grover Washington Jr. on soprano and tenor saxes; Bobby Broom on guitar; Buddy Williams on drums; Ralph Dorsey on percussion and my copy used in this report is the 1989 Stereo album, the only release on LP.

The first side kicks off with a mid-tempo rendition of the Michael Jackson hit, The Way You Make Me Feel that the King of Pop originally released on his 1987 Epic album, Bad (E 40600). The group presents a danceable tune that features the front line only on the opening and closing chorus in support of Earland and the rhythm section. Charles cooks gently on the lead solo, giving the pop song a bluesy makeover with an irresistible beat. Broom delivers a funky answer to the organist with some down-home country cooking on the final interpretation that comes through like a fresh cool breeze into the end theme and fadeout. That's A Good Question is Bobby's contribution to the album, showing he's a gifted composer with a happy, effervescent original which opens with a soulful melody by the rhythm section led by David Newman on soprano sax. The first reading by Bobby is a solo of delightful pleasure. David is in a marvelous voice on the next reading possessing a sweet tone that mines a vein of unsuspected riches from each note. Charles delivers the final statement, answering the question with a



passionate performance that builds to a consummate conclusion.

The ensemble takes an uptempo journey on the first side finale, *Don't Be So Mean Arlene*, the first of three originals by Earland opening with an invigorating collective theme treatment. Broom makes his presence felt on the opening statement with a short workout, followed by Soloff who infuses plenty of electrical energy in the first reading. Newman swings into the next performance with swiftly paced, scintillating verses, stepping aside for Earland who digs into the final presentation soaring aggressively over the rhythm section's superlative groundwork. The title tune starts the second side with a heated opening chorus that collectively raises the temperature a few degrees. I first heard this lightning-quick cooker performed live by Charles and his quartet on June 30, 1993, at The Atlanta Jazz Festival in Grant Park. Their performance that day energized the crowd to a fever pitch with a forty-five-minute set that brought the crowd to their feet and had everyone in attendance dancing throughout the park. David starts the soloing this time, still on tenor, setting the pace with driving force, then Lew gives an exuberantly frisky reading of formidable energy. Bobby follows, adding a tasty treat of spicy soul-food for the listener's ears, stepping aside for Charles who delivers a lively aggressiveness on the final performance ahead of the ensemble's closing chorus and abrupt stop.

Heaven was a huge hit for the brother and sister gospel duo BeBe and CeCe Winans and served as the title song of their 1988 Capitol album (C1 90959). Written by Benjamin (BeBe) Winans and Keith Thomas, this tune brings Grover Washington, Jr. to center stage for the first time. Grover leads the rhythm section through the medium tempo melody and opening solo with a relaxing informality on soprano sax, then Charles closes with a statement of graceful beauty that moves along until the soprano sends a soft message to take your breath away into the tender coda. Earland's *Cosmic Friends* ends the album on a cheerfully optimistic note with a tribute to trumpet player Woody Shaw, and fellow organists Don Patterson and Larry Young. The song comes to life with a vigorously brisk theme stated by the ensemble collectively. Grover starts the solos with a strong tenor statement swinging to a mesmerizing groove. Lou delivers an equal amount of heat on the second interpretation with his own vivacious verses. Bobby executes the next solo as a man possessed with agility and Charles ends the

readings with astounding energy leading to a joyful excursion ending with a soulful fade into oblivion.

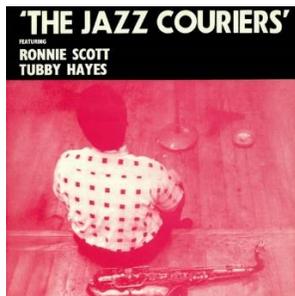
Earland was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania beginning his professional career playing the tenor sax for organist Jimmy McGriff in 1958 at the age of seventeen. Two years later in 1960, he formed his first group and later began playing the organ with guitarist Pat Martino. It was during this time he was introduced to alto saxophonist Lou Donaldson who hired him after Lonnie Smith left to pursue a solo career. He was with Donaldson's group only one year but appears on three Blue Note albums, *Say It Loud* (BST 84299) and *Hot Dog* (BST 84318) in 1969, and *Everything I Play Is Funky* (BST 84337) in 1970. I became a fan of his music after hearing *Black Talk* (Prestige PR 10024/PRST 7758), that was also released that year, started collecting his LP's and even got to know him personally after reviewing his 1988 Milestone album, *Front Burner* (M-1965). In 1970, he formed a group that introduced Grover Washington, Jr. to the jazz world on *Living Black* (PRST-10009), their first live album. His nickname, *The Mighty Burner* was attributed to his hard-driving, steaming organ solos and he recorded for other labels including Cannonball Records, Columbia, High Note Records, Mercury, Muse Records, and Savant. Charles also traveled extensively throughout the US and around the world until his passing from heart failure on December 11, 1999, at the age of fifty-eight.

*Third Degree Burn* was produced by Bob Porter who also supervised the album *Black Talk* and has reissued many classic blues and jazz recordings. The man behind the dials is Engineer Malcolm Addey of A&R Studios whose professional resume includes work on albums for Ace Records, Blue Note, Capitol Jazz, EMI, Mosaic Records, Pacific Jazz, Roulette Jazz, and The Blues Alliance. His assistant is Richie Romaniello who has also done work for Atlantic Jazz, Blue Note, Electric Bird, and Paddle Wheel. The Mastering was done by George Horn of Fantasy Records and the sound quality is exquisite except for a bit of harshness on Charles' microphone during Newman's soprano sax solo on *That's A Good Question*. The soundstage is excellent on the remaining five tracks throughout the treble, midrange, and low-end spectrum, so please don't let that discourage you against seeking *Third Degree Burn* out for a spot in the Soul-Jazz section of your LP library. The music more than makes up for this small issue making this LP deserving of a serious audition allowing the listener to enjoy a marvelous



album of organ jazz by Charles Earland that should appeal to new listeners or seasoned jazz fans.

Malcolm Addey, Black Talk, Lou Donaldson, Charles Earland, Everything I Play Is Funky, George Horn, Hot Dog, Living Black, Richie Romaniello, Say It Loud – Source: Discogs.com



The Jazz Couriers – The Jazz Couriers Featuring Ronnie Scott and Tubby Hayes  
Jasmine Records

This month's final LP is a recent addition to my library that I was lucky to find after hearing two tracks from the album and reading a review on the London Jazz Collector website in 2015. The Jazz Couriers (Tempo TP 15) are a British quintet that was inspired by Art Blakey and The Jazz Messengers. The group would be together for only two years, but in that time, they provided some of the best jazz in the United Kingdom. The album was originally released on the British label Tempo Records and an original copy in mint condition is a rare and desirable collectible among jazz fans that can bring its owner some serious money in a jazz LP auction. The quintet consists of Tubby Hayes on tenor sax and vibes; Ronnie Scott on tenor sax; Terry Shannon on piano; Phil Bates on bass and Bill Eyden on drums. They are joined by Jimmy Deuchar (tracks: A1, B3) on trumpet and my copy used in this report is the eighties Jasmine Records Mono reissue (JASM 2004).

The LP opens and closes with one speedy chorus of Sonny Stitt's The Theme by the quintet that ends as quickly as it starts. The opening track is Through The Night Roared The Overland Express, a happy original written by Hayes beginning with a steady beat and splendid work by the front line who interact marvelously during the melody. Tubby kicks off the opening chorus with tasty phrases, then Jimmy takes over for an enthusiastically compelling strong-toned presentation. Ronnie delivers pure excitement on the third

interpretation and Terry concludes the solos with a dazzling display of fireworks that rocks into the ensemble's closing chorus. On A Misty Night, the beautiful ballad by arranger, composer, jazz pianist Tadd Dameron was written in 1956, making its debut on his 1957 Prestige album, Mating Call (PRLP 7070/PRST 7247). The quintet opens the song softly with a gentle introduction and melody led by Scott and Hayes who compliments him on the vibes. Ronnie establishes a lush mood of tenderness on the lead solo that effectively conveys a deep feeling, Tubby takes the next solo, giving a thoughtfully expressive presentation. Terry and Phil share one chorus of refined elegance with a subtle touch before the affectionate climax.

Plebus, the second work from Hayes' pen moves the beat back to midtempo and is dedicated to British music executive Tony Hall (who supervised this album and wrote the liner notes) and a young model named Jackie Collins. Scott starts the soloing with a delightfully crafted presentation possessing a very solid melodic line and full-tone through each phrase. Hayes is up next and his vibes cruise at a comfortable speed on the next reading with a performance that will have your fingers popping and toes tapping along to the irresistible beat. Shannon also makes a strong contribution with a relaxed execution and harmonic sophistication showing off his capabilities as a lyrical soloist. Hayes returns, this time on tenor for a gorgeous reading that sails firmly inspired by the excellent groundwork of his colleagues. Reunion by tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley closes the first side at an uptempo pace featuring Hayes on vibes during the opening melody, ensemble bridge, and out-chorus. Ronnie charges into the lead solo of this fiery cooker, slicing through each verse with extreme intensity. Tubby exhibits his own brand of strength on tenor for the next reading with plenty of electrically charged notes and Terry continues the aggressiveness of his colleagues with feisty agility on the third performance. Bill gets his first chance to solo and exchanges some high-octane riffs with both saxes into the theme's reprise and coda.

Oh, My! by jazz drummer Allan Ganley opens the second side with a hot theme statement that expresses the joy and pleasure both horns are feeling as it unfolds. Tubby takes off first and really digs into this cooker in fine form from start to finish. Terry provides the next few choruses of happily swinging sounds with a firm command of his instrument for an enthusiastic solo. Ronnie follows with a series of fiery verses



emanating at a brisk velocity, then both saxophonists share the spotlight for two choruses that lead the group back to the closing chorus and conclusion. A Foggy Day, the popular song by George and Ira Gershwin was written in 1937, making its debut in the musical-comedy, A Damsel In Distress released that year. The quintet's interpretation begins with a tender melody statement by both horns which blossoms into four performances of elegant sincerity by Hayes, Scott, Shannon, and Bates resulting in a delicately intimate, sultry rendition.

Hayes' Royal Ascot was named for Ascot Racecourse, the British track used for thoroughbred horse racing in Ascot, Berkshire, England, brings back Jimmy Deuchar featuring Hayes again on vibes. This infectiously cheery tune comes to life with a nimble opening chorus by the quintet with Ronnie and Tubby leading the way. Hayes is first in the solo spotlight providing some compelling ideas with a lively bounce that shines like a new penny. Jimmy comes next with a short reading that is engaging, playful and sadly over before you know it, then Ronnie delivers a brief presentation that's melodically imaginative, and Terry delivers a swift chorus on the finale before the close. Irving Berlin's 1935 popular song, Cheek To Cheek wraps up the album at breakneck speed, beginning with a blazing melody statement by the ensemble. Tubby solos first setting the pace with a fiery showcase of intense heat. Ronnie asserts his musical masculinity with a rapid, searing reading that blows the doors off each verse then Bill ends this melodic journey with several propulsive exchanges between both saxes marking the end of this swinging set of jazz.

Bert Steffans and Cyril Windobanks are the men behind the dials of the original recording and in my opinion, Jasmine has done a splendid job with the remastering of the mono tapes. The sound is very crisp with each of the instruments coming through your speakers vividly. The eight selections that make up this release by The Jazz Couriers recapture the spirit of the Bebop era led by two of Britain's top saxophonists, Tubby Hayes and Ronnie Scott, as well as the excellent ensemble work throughout the album exhibited by their bandmates. The one issue I have with the LP is why Jasmine chose to do a pink filter over the original black and white photo of Hayes sitting at the bandstand that Tempo used for the original album? It reminds me of the Blue Note reissues that Applause Records released from 1969 to 1982 with pink and yellow filters over the original cover photos and some pictures that looked nothing like the original

LP cover at all. Setting that issue aside, the Jasmine Records reissue of The Jazz Couriers is an album that's a true bargain considering there are only a lucky few who have copies of the 1957 original. The music also still stands up over six decades later and is well worth auditioning for a position in your LP library. For a comprehensive look at the careers and lives of Tubby Hayes and Ronnie Scott, please check out Wikipedia.org. See you next month and Happy Listening Gang!

Applause Records, The Jazz Couriers, Tempo Records, Atelier Sawano, Speciality Records, Mating Call – Source: Discogs.com

Reunion, Cheek To Cheek – Source: [www.londonjazzcollector.wordpress.com](http://www.londonjazzcollector.wordpress.com)

Bert Steffans, Cyril Windobanks – Source: Album liner notes by Tony Hall

A Foggy Day, A Damsel In Distress, Ascot Racecourse – Source: Wikipedia.org