

# Record Reviews



## MONTY ALEXANDER TRIO MONTREUX ALEXANDER LIVE!

*Nite Mist Blues; Feelings; Satin Doll; Work Song; Drown In My Own Tears; Battle Hymn Of The Republic* (47.00)

Alexander (p); John Clayton (b); Jeff Hamilton (d). Montreux, 10 June 1976.

**MPS LC00979**

★★★

Sandwiched on the bill between the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra and the Stan Getz Quartet, the young Monty Alexander didn't appear remotely daunted by the prospect of his first major international jazz festival appearance. Quickly moving through the gears on Ahmad Jamal's *Nite Mist Blues*, in a

little under 10 minutes his first celebrated trio have the audience enraptured, and with each successive number their very audible approval grows to an almost overwhelming volume.

Yet Alexander's punchy and well-nuanced set is not just about thoroughly road-tested blues and gospel variations – take the contemplative and deeply soulful cover of Morris Albert's pop hit *Feelings*, where Clayton's sympathetic counterpoint is nigh on perfect. A cleverly re-framed *Satin Doll* races out of the blocks as a boogie-woogie, before Alexander settles into a relaxed groove and rapidly cycles through a string of familiar quotations. *Work Song* grows organically from a dark low-end intro, and generously featuring both Clayton and Hamilton it is every bit as hard-driving as you'd hope and expect. By now the near delirious audience is clapping to every beat, though the righteous balladry of *Drown In My Own Tears* introduces some gravity before the blue touch-paper really ignites on the closing finale, a playful romp through *Battle Hymn Of The Republic*.

Beautifully restored in gatefold LP-style packaging, this mainstream treasure from the MPS vaults is an absolute must for lovers of "the tradition".

Fred Grand

## MOSE ALLISON

### I'M NOT TALKIN': THE SONG STYLINGS OF MOSE ALLISON 1957-1971

*I'm Not Talkin'; Parchman Farm; Foolkiller; If You Only Knew; Baby, Please Don't Go; The Seventh Son; I'm Smashed; Wild Man On The Loose; If You're Goin' To The City; Everybody Cryin' Mercy; I Love The Life I Live; Young Man's Blues; Back On The Corner; You Can*

*Count On Me To Do My Part; Lost Mind; Eyesight To The Blind; Your Mind Is On Vacation; Jus Like Livin'; If You Live; V-8 Ford Blues; Your Molecular Structure; Hello There, Universe; Western Man; Swingin' Machine* (60.02)

Allison (v, p). No other musicians detailed. 1957-1971.

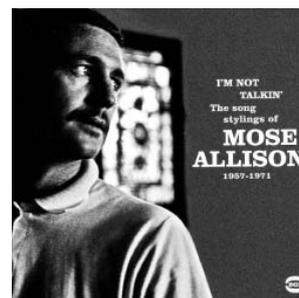
**Beat Goes Public 304**

★★★

I came to Mose Allison late. Like many a teenager, I had heard his name mentioned by Roger Daltry on The Who – Live At Leeds but it didn't register. It was Van Morrison and his album *Tell Me Something: The Songs Of Mose Allison* (1996) that made me take notice.

His death on 15 November 2015 was a sad loss for blues, folk and jazz music; which (sadly) did not get the publicity it deserved. Therein lies the paradox that was Mose Allison – an extremely accomplished jazz pianist and a hugely talented lyricist whose songs were covered by dozens of musicians the world over. But fame and commercial record success always seemed to elude Allison. However, he was not without good fortune and his friendship with Nesuhi Ertegun, producer and owner of Atlantic Records, ensured a string of album releases despite poor commercial sales.

This collection of songs covers Allison's time with Prestige, Columbia, Epic and Atlantic Records. There are 24 tracks in total, including some of Allison's most enduring songs such as *I'm Not Talking*, *Foolkiller*, *Parchman Farm* and *Young Man's Blues*. Allison was not averse to reworking songs from the Willie Dixon songbook and *The Seventh Son* and *I Love The Life I Live* are included. If you know Allison's work well, you may quibble about the songs included or excluded. If you are new to



the songs of Allison this CD is a good place to start.

Ian Lomax

## LOUIS ARMSTRONG ALL-STARS

### STUTTGART 1959

*Sleepy Time Down South; Indiana; Basin Street Blues; Tiger Rag; Now You Has Jazz; Perdido; The World Is Waiting For The Sunrise; I Get Ideas When We're Dancing; Love Is Just Around The Corner; Mack The Knife; Stompin' At The Savoy; Strutting With Some Barbecue; St Louis Blues; Ko Ko Mo; When The Saints Go Marching In; The Faithful Husar* (76.31)

Armstrong (t, v); Peanuts Hucko (cl); Trummy Young (tb); Billy Kyle (p); Mort Herbert (b); Danny Barcelona (d); Velma Middleton (v). Liederhalle, Stuttgart, 15 February 1959.

**Jazzhaus 462**

★★★★

If you believe that the one essential ingredient of jazz is improvisation, you will always have a problem with Louis Armstrong. This is especially the case when it comes to the All-Stars, because there was very little, if any, improvisation in an All-Stars show. On the other hand, everything Louis played or sang, plus the content and shape of the entire performance, was absolutely and incontrovertibly his. The audiences liked it, he liked it, so why change things? That was his view, and the musicians who

### JJ CONTENT

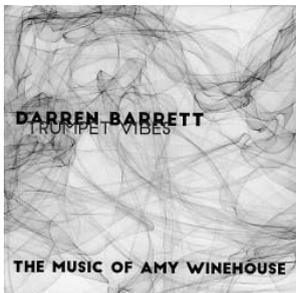
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stayed with him longest, like Trummy Young, tended to be the ones who saw things that way too.

This was a good version of the All-Stars, if not quite the best. Ed Hall, Arvell Shaw and Barrett Deems had just left, to be replaced by Hucko, Herbert and the thunderous Danny Barcelona. They all play well here, particularly Peanuts Hucko and Billy Kyle, whose brief but immaculate piano introductions tie the whole thing together. The audience clearly loved it, the more so because they loved Louis himself. It's not going too far to say that European audiences at that time held him in a kind of reverence, which had as much to do with their history as with his.

The package includes a DVD of about half the concert. If you never attended an All-Stars show, I can assure you that this captures the atmosphere rather well. If you did, you may find yourself charmed all over again.

Dave Gelly



**DARREN BARRETT  
TRUMPET VIBES**

**THE MUSIC OF AMY WINEHOUSE**

*Tears Dry On Their Own; Rehab; Our Day Will Come; Back To Black; Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow; Cupid; Just Friends; To Know Him Is To Love Him; Monkey Man; Tears Dry On Their Own (Clean Version)* (30.35)

Barrett (t, kyb, pc); Joanna Teters (v); Simon Moullier (vib); Alexander Toth (b); Anthony Toth (d, pc); Judith Barrett (pc); Jonathan Asperil (g); Marty Walsh (g); Michael Wooten, Santiago Bosch, Chad Selph (kyb); Tomoaki Baba (bar); Warren Wolf (vib). July, 2016.

**dB Studios, darrenbarrett.com**

★★★

Barrett's résumé is impressive. He's a winner of the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Competition, an associate professor at Berklee College of Music and has had professional collabora-

**CRITICS' CHOICE**

The 10 CDs JJ critics most wanted to hear from this month's review pile

Jerry Coker	Modern Music	Fresh Sound FSR-CD 917
Keith Jarrett	A Multitude Of Angels	ECM 570 2466
Don Joseph	A Tribute To The Jazz Poetry Of Don Joseph	Fresh Sound FSR-CD 919
Mary Ann McCall	Complete Recordings 1950-1959	Fresh Sound FSR-CD 918
Modern Jazz Quartet	Live In Paris 1960-1961	Frémeaux 5645
Joe Newman	The Happy Cats	Fresh Sound FSR-CD 914
Jack Teagarden/Earl Hines All Stars	In Concert Manchester Free Trade Hall 1957	Upbeat 258
Nick Travis	How About You?	Fresh Sound FSR-CD 912
Various	Paris 1945	Milan 399 845
Mike Westbrook	Paris	ASC 166

tions with Elvin Jones, Jackie McLean, Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter. His Jamaican roots have stimulated many reggae fusions within his neobop recordings and it comes as no surprise that his latest offering is a tribute to the departed British soul singer.

This is an enjoyable listen for Winehouse fans. The production and performance values are exemplary. Barrett's command of his instrument and Teters' naturally soulful timbre both capture the essence and musicality of Winehouse's style. His ensemble also provides faultless accompaniment on each track. Occasional solos play out on Winehouse's harmonic foundations, and these are commendable. However, the arrangements are near carbon copies of the originals. *To Know Him Is To Love Him* is a notable exception and I would like to have heard the famous *Love Is A Losing Game* given a similar treatment. For sure a man of Barrett's talent and ability could add more unique touches to all these pieces as well as offering high-quality tribute, much as Winehouse did with The Zutons' *Valerie*.

Jason Balzarano

**RAOUL BJÖRKENHEIM'S  
ECSTASY**

**OUT OF THE BLUE**

*Heads & Tails; Quintrille; A Fly In The House Of Love; Uptown; You Never Know; OLJ; Roller Coaster; Zebra Dreams* (42.00)

Pauli Lyytinen (bar, ts, ss); Björkenheim (elg); Jori Huhtala (b); Markku Ounaskari (d). Helsinki, 19-21 November 2014.

**Cuneiform Rune 413**

★★★★

Ever since Edward Vesala's 1987 release *Lumi*, the utterly distinctive guitar of Raoul Björkenheim has been ever present in my life. The two early 90s ECM albums by his quartet Krakatau stand comparison with anything from the label's 70s heyday, and the group's regrettably short lifespan left a feeling of unfinished business. 2014's *eCsTaSy* (Cuneiform) signalled a return to the shorter and more structured improvisational forms of Krakatau, and the group is now the guitarist's primary vehicle.

It opens with the slowly rising *Heads & Tails*; a languid melody sets the scene for a broodingly powerful tenor statement by Lyytinen. Think of Garbarek's Tryptikon or Afric Pepperbird and you get a good idea of the group's antecedents. *Quintrille*, by contrast, is the kind of off-kilter bar-room boogie that Krakatau always included in their repertoire, bringing a moment's levity before the deeply meditative ballad *A Fly In The House Of Love*. Using alligator clips to "prepare" his guitar, he creates an almost Balinese effect, heightening the album's abiding sense of mysticism. *Uptown* is pure Mingus and showcases Björkenheim's take on Hendrix, *You Never Know* provides a wistful and almost cinematic interlude, Huhtala's dark soundscape *OLJ* rides a heavy Krautrock beat, *Roller Coaster* doffs a cap to Ornette, and the closing soundscape *Zebra Dreams* slowly reveals a deep pool of reverie.

Björkenheim's idiosyncratic track sequencing only accentuates the album's impact, its eight richly detailed reliefs bathing in a myriad of shades. Harking back to the early roots of today's European free-jazz, *Out Of The Blue* is a work of great profundity.

Fred Grand



**ØYSTEIN BLIX  
CONDITIONS**

*Salvare l'Italia; Aria Fritta; Momentum; Intrata; Alto Della Nomino; Sticazzi; Interlude 1; Interlude 2; Anche Cultura; Asse Sorri* (36.54)

Blix (tb); Kristian Svalestad Olstad (g, elec); Aleksander Kostopolov (d, elec); Mimas Male Choir, conducted by Ursa Lah. Tromsø, 24-27 June 2015.

**Losen 156**

★★★

Seeking to express the "plight" of artists and culture in modern Italy, this is a bold, complex, astonishing blend of unusual instrumentation and opera choruses. You would think the act of balancing electronically treated guitars and drums plus trombone with the more theatrical operatic flourishes would be a tricky one to manage. Somehow Blix makes it sound effortless and perfectly natural.

A perfect example is the opening exaggerated electronica of *Intrata*, set against the stabbing acoustic voice of the trombone, and the almost industrial samples and sounds. Olstad's overdriven yet not distorted electric guitar stitches the disparate pieces together seamlessly, bridging the analogue-digital divide. In *Sticazzi* a layered and sinister vocal protest builds in depth and volume until percussion seeps in, paving the way for a dense and heavy ambience.