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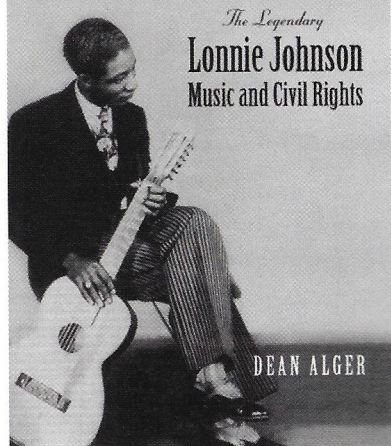
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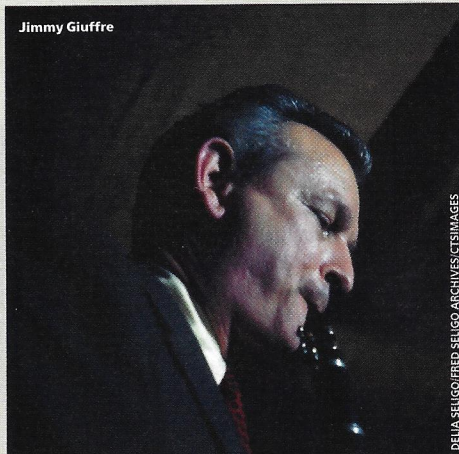
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Historical / BY DAVID KUNIAN

High-Flying Days

Jimmy Giuffre



DELIA SELIGO/FRED SELIGO ARCHIVES/CTSI/IMAGES

Three recent albums help fill in historical and musical gaps from the '50s to the early '70s.

The nimble and high-flying joy of bebop is beautifully evident on the three-disc **Birdland 1953 (ESP-Disk 4073; 51:17/62:52/54:47 ★★★★★)**, an invaluable document from one of pianist Bud Powell's best periods. His single-note solos go in unanticipated directions and stop and start in unexpected places. The cuts here show his brilliance both in playing and composition, before his slow decline and death in 1966 at age 41.

These tunes come from recordings made at New York's Birdland club from February to September 1953. They have been released before, but in this new version the piano is clear and up front. Powell's famous technique is fully on display on the many different versions of "Dance Of The Infidels" and "Embraceable You." Also exciting about these three CDs are the live versions of Powell's originals such as "Un Poco Loco" and "Oblivion." On "Parisian Thoroughfare," the pianist embellishes the lush melody, while "Glass Enclosure" is given a powerful, dramatic rendition.

Powell's fellow musicians here include Roy Haynes and Art Taylor on drums; Charles Mingus, Curley Russell and George Duvivier on bass; and guest spots from saxophonist Charlie Parker and trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie. Both Haynes and Taylor add driving rhythms and Latin accents while playing their entire kits. Parker and Gillespie play on separate tracks and sound relaxed and buoyant while revving up versions of "Woody 'N' You," "Salt Peanuts" and "Moose The Mooche."

Ordering info: espdisk.com

Jimmy Giuffre's **New York Concerts (Elemental Music 5990425; 36:27/50:22 ★★★★★)**

is a previously unreleased two-disc set recorded at Judson Hall and Columbia University's Wollman Auditorium in 1965, featuring the leader's trio and quartet from the time period. The tapes were made by George Klabin, the same engineer who recorded Bill Evans' *Live At Art D'Lugoff's Top Of The Gate* (Resonance). These live tracks are especially significant since they come from a decade in which Giuffre did little recording.

Giuffre (1921–2008) plays both clarinet and tenor, and gets a wide range of notes and sounds from both instruments. Twenty-first century ears have adjusted to avant-garde playing, but his approach was radical in 1965, and it is easy to hear the excitement of the players exploring new musical ideas. At times he jumps around with unconventional intervals, and sometimes he pushes the sound of his instruments to their extremes, but never for too long. There is a lot of space in the tunes, and the players focus on melody and texture while listening to each other carefully.

On the Judson Hall disc, bassist Richard Davis gets a strong and heavy tone from his bass,

which matches well with Joe Chambers' emphasis on snare drum. Ornette Coleman's music is a reference point here, not only in the group's version of his song "Crossroads," but also in the way that the band starts and stops. Some of Giuffre's phrasing even has an Ornette-type rhythm, but Giuffre was working on similar concepts around the same time. Even with the addition of piano for the Wollman Auditorium concert, there is still an Ornette vibe—though Giuffre's music is less dense.

The best thing about this recording is the surprise that the players convey. On "Syncopate" on the second disc, there is a beautiful moment where everyone comes together in a shimmering crescendo before continuing to weave their lines in and out of each other. The abstraction of "Drive" gives way to a honking rhythm-and-blues riff with Chambers' shuffle. Giuffre pushes the beat into a propelling, powerful rhythm before hanging back with short-note phrases. And on the standout track "Cry, Want," Don Friedman's flowing piano ventures further out, giving the song a medieval hue.

Ordering info: ingrooves.com

The setting is relaxed and casual on pianist Oscar Peterson (1925–2007) and saxophonist Ben Webster's **During This Time (NDR/Art Of Groove/MIG 80212; 73:45/67:28 ★★★★★)**, a live CD/DVD set recorded for the NDR Jazz Workshop in Hannover, Germany, in December 1972, less than a year before Webster died.

Both men play and swing like it is second nature to them. Webster's wide, reedy tone is in full effect, and Peterson's playing always serves the songs. They do standards such as "I Got It Bad And That Ain't Good" and "Cotton Tail," which Webster was associated with, and although there are better versions, these versions are excellent.

Both players focus on telling stories in their solos rather than merely collecting notes, and they elevate versions of "Perdido" and "Come Sunday." All the tunes here have the authority that excellent jazzmen bring to their playing.

Webster and Peterson didn't really have periods where they were not playing or recording, but their pairing in this live setting is a rare one. **DB**

Ordering info: amazon.com