

Los Angeles Jazz Scene

April 2014

Ronnie Scott - Soho Blues – The Ronnie Scott Anthology 1956-62 (Acrobat)

Tubby Hayes - New Edition – Rare Radio Recordings 1958-62 (Acrobat)

Dick Morrissey - On The Spot – The Complete Recordings 1961-63 (Acrobat)

British jazz matured and became significant in the 1950s. In addition to what would be called “trad jazz,” quite a few British bop-oriented musicians developed into world class players. Near the front of the pack are the three tenor-saxophonists featured in these definitive sets put out by Acrobat (available from MVD Entertainment at mvdb2b.com).

Ronnie Scott will always be best remembered for founding and running the London club Ronnie Scott’s. Because he hated to record, there are many fewer recordings by Scott than one would expect, particularly from the second-half of his career. Soho Blues, a two-CD set, has all of Scott’s recordings as a leader during 1956-62 plus a few sideman appearances. Scott, who can be thought of as the British Dexter Gordon due to his ability to sound relaxed and unflappable at all tempos, is heard in prime form throughout these swinging and boppish numbers. He co-leads a ten-piece group with drummer Tony Crombie, interacts with trumpeter Dizzy Reece, is heard live with a quintet, leads groups that include trumpeter Jimmy Deuchar and altoist Derek Humble, and performs one number with Zoot Sims.

A true giant, Tubby Hayes only lived to be 38 but during his peak years he had few equals. On New Edition, a two-CD set that complements the remarkable six-CD set of studio sides The Complete Tempo Recordings 1955-59, Hayes is featured on rare broadcasts from 1958-62. While the recording quality is often not flawless, it is always listenable. Hayes, who could play with the speed of Johnny Griffin and is at times reminiscent of Sal Nistico with Woody Herman’s band (he preceded Nistico by several years), is outstanding throughout these performances both on tenor and vibes. The first ten numbers feature him with the Jazz Couriers, the popular group that he co-led with Ronnie Scott. Otherwise he is heard with quartets and quintets, a tentet led by Jimmy Deuchar, and with pianist Victor Feldman, the Johnny Dankworth Orchestra on “Cherokee” and an American trio on “Oleo.” No matter the setting or song, Tubby Hayes is consistently brilliant.

Dick Morrissey started out as a bebopper before exploring both r&b and fusion in the 1970s. On The Spot is a single CD that reissues the music from his first two Lps as a leader. Both are quartet sessions with 1961’s It’s Morrissey, Man including a particularly wide range of songs. Highlights include “St. Thomas,” “A Bench In The Park,” “Happy Feet” (the latter two were by the 1930 Paul Whiteman Orchestra), Coleman Hawkins’ “Sanctity,” and Charles Mingus’ “Jelly Roll.” The second album, 1963’s Have You Heard, mostly has songs by the group’s pianist Harry South and finds Morrissey stretching himself to hard bop and beyond.

All three of these perfectly planned reissues are well worth exploring by fans of the era. Every jazz fan should know who Ronnie Scott, Tubby Hayes and Dick Morrissey were.

- Scott Yanow