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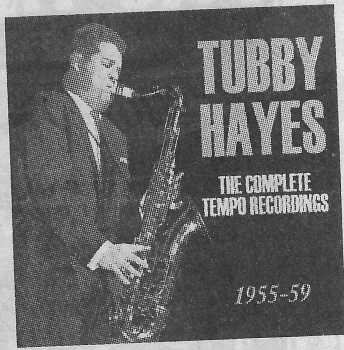
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# Tubby Hayes: The Tempo Recordings

BY ARMAND LEWIS



**M**OST PEOPLE THINK OF jazz as a particularly American art form. While it certainly had its beginnings and primary development in the U.S., there were many prominent players elsewhere in the world starting in the 1940s and '50s. Many of the best foreign players came from Europe, where a heightened cultural atmosphere and a love of American entertainment bred musicians that in many cases were equal to their stateside counterparts. Often, these talented individuals were unknown outside of their native countries due to limited touring opportunities and extremely minimal (if any) distribution of their recordings.

Possibly the best of the English players was tenor saxophonist Edward "Tubby" Hayes. Born in London in 1935, Hayes first made a name for himself in British big bands while in his teens. By the mid 1950s, he was recording his own groups for the short-lived British Tempo label. And while his American recordings are all excellent, Tempo had his best performances. Most of these have been re-released in recent decades as awareness of Hayes' talent has spread to the United States and elsewhere, but were not compiled together into one set until now.

*Tubby Hayes - The Complete Tempo Recordings 1955-59* (Acrobat ACSD 6002) brings together Hayes' entire output for the label during what would turn out to be his prime years and best recordings. The six CD set collects together 86 tracks showcasing Hayes' formidable

ability in a variety of settings and contexts including with his own quartets, quintets and big band. These groups feature collaborations with many of Britain's best players including Jimmy Deuchar (trumpet), Terry Shannon (piano) and Tony Kinsey (drums) among others.

The set also includes all the early studio recordings of the group Hayes co-led with fellow tenor saxophonist Ronnie Scott - *The Jazz Couriers*. The Couriers specialized in the type of saxophone battles that in the U.S. were exemplified by the Johnny Griffin / Eddie Lockjaw Davis *Tenor Battle* LPs of the late 1950s and early '60s. The two horns would improvise as hard and fast as possible over a tune while a swinging rhythm section tried to keep up with the fireworks. Even after all these years, the Hayes and Scott tracks like "Guys and Dolls" and the lightning fast "Cheek to Cheek" hold their own against the best of the American tenor battle recordings.

The comparison between Tubby Hayes and Johnny Griffin is appropriate. Both shared a similar sound on the tenor, both could play at lightning fast speed and, completely independently

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of each other, both were nicknamed "The Little Giant". Sadly, by the time Griffin took up residence in Europe, Tempo had ceased recording and other labels had cut back on recording jazz in favor of rock & roll, so Hayes and Griffin never got the chance to record together. Truly a missed opportunity.

Other tracks feature Hayes on his second instrument — the vibraphone. Being able to switch instruments in mid tune gave his groups an extra dimension and range — notable on such tracks as the poignant ballad "Time Was".

The history of British modern jazz is relatively unknown here in the U.S. but one could not ask for a better introduction than the recordings heard here.

Best of all, there are the finest of Hayes' 1950s quartet recordings including "Tin Tin Deo" and "The Surrey With the Fringe On Top", which came at the end of Tempo's brief life as a jazz label. Perhaps due to competition from imported American jazz albums, the rise of rock & roll, or the emigration to America of a number of top British jazz artists such as Victor Feldman and Dizzy Reece, Tempo's parent company, British Decca, simply shut the label down as the 1960s began.

Hayes would continue to play and record for a variety of labels both in Britain and also in America, including several excellent albums for Epic records (well worth searching for) as well as an album with Roland Kirk for Mercury.

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Armand Lewis buys and sells rare Jazz LPs. He can be reached at [mrbluenote@peoplepc.com](mailto:mrbluenote@peoplepc.com)