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Tuesday, June 9, 2009

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Music Reviews: Art Tatum and Ben Webster, Sonny Rollins

- [Megan Morgan/The Daily](#)

Tuesday, June 2, 2009

Art Tatum and Ben Webster

“The Album”

Essential Jazz Classics

Release: June 2

4 ½ out of 5 stars

I know from my Jazz Appreciation class that there is no such thing as a “Romantic Jazz” category of music, but if there was, this reissue of Art Tatum and Ben Webster’s “The Album” would certainly fall into it. From the entrance of the slow and beautiful piano notes from Tatum, the first song “All the Things You Are” takes on a dreamy quality that lasts throughout the album. When Webster enters on tenor sax, you’d be hard pressed not to sigh or close your eyes. This album was also chosen as one of the best 100 jazz albums of all time.

“The Album” represents the only studio collaboration of these two jazz giants and also has added importance because it was Tatum’s last recording ever – he died shortly after. It is immediately obvious to the listener that both players are extremely talented, but it is also nice that Tatum and Webster never try to outdo each other in their respective solos. Red Callender on bass and Bill Douglass on drums fill out the quartet, but the spotlight remains on Tatum and Webster.

This reissue includes five solo recordings of Tatum on piano, playing five songs already on the album. This may seem redundant, but it is actually really interesting to see how different the same songs sound when played by just one person. And while you may think that the solo recordings would be more relaxed, this is not the case. With all of Tatum’s flourishes, runs and extra touches, the solo songs are more lively and bouncy.

So if you’ve got some wooing to do this summer, or if you just want some chill music to listen to while drinking wine, check out this reissue of “The Album.”



Art Tatum and Ben Webster - "The Album". Photo provided.

Sonny Rollins

“Saxophone Colossus”

Essential Jazz Classics

Release: June 2

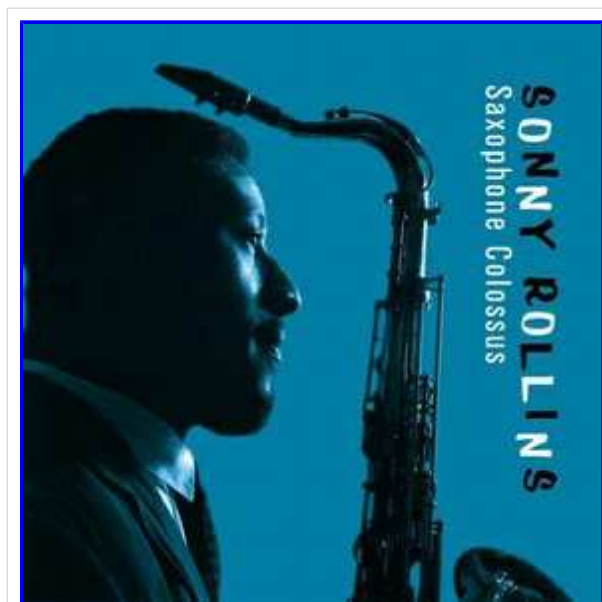
4 ½ out of 5 stars

Bebop is a form of jazz that originated in the 40s and it is defined as a faster form of the genre with heavy emphasis on improvised solos. Bebop tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins’ “Saxophone Colossus” has been named one of the best 100 jazz albums and it is consequently also very important in the bebop genre.

Even with bebop’s characteristic many-note style, Rollins’ technique of bebop isn’t hard to get behind. His solos are usually centered on melodies rather than on chords. But, of course, this isn’t what you hear when you listen to “Saxophone Colossus” for enjoyment. What you do hear are lots of catchy saxophone licks that you’ll find yourself humming all day.

This reissue of “Saxophone Colossus” is actually composed of two original Sonny Rollins’ recordings of his albums “Saxophone Colossus” (1956) and “Work Time” (1955). Both albums include Max Roach on drums. About half of the songs were written by Rollins.

“Saxophone Colossus” is recommended to anyone who wants to expand their jazz collection, or for those who may be new to jazz but who can appreciate musical creativity. Because Rollins certainly has it. Sonny Rollins is still touring and recording, so check out this living legend.



Sonny Rollins - "Saxophone Colossus". Photo provided.

-Megan Morgan is a professional writing senior

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