

DVDs

Efor Films preserves rare TV performances with mixed results

Various Artists

Jazz Shots From the East Coast, Vol. 1

EFOR FILMS DVD 2869092

Various Artists

Jazz Voice-The Ladies Sing Jazz, Vols. 1 & 2

EFOR FILMS DVD 2869059, 2869060

Vintage television broadcasts of live jazz have been sporadically available to consumers, but Efor Films has launched a series of DVDs compiling many obscure performances, along with a few familiar ones. Due to the wide variance in camera-work, editing and condition of the source material, the audio and video isn't always consistent, though technical flaws don't overly hinder most songs. But the lack of personnel listings, recording dates and venues, plus the label's insistence in omitting announcements (sometimes clipping introductions and closings) are frustrating.

Jazz Shots From the East Coast, Vol. 1 focuses exclusively on instrumentals, circa 1952 to 1982. In the 1960s, an emaciated Bill Evans plays a stunning unaccompanied "I Loves You, Porgy," while he looks far healthier in a delightful romp through "Up With the Lark" with Eddie Gomez at the 1975 Monterey Jazz Festival. Oscar Peterson is heard in two undated performances with Ray Brown and Ed Thigpen. The studio setting of his "Place St. Henri" is far more interesting than a poorly shot, badly aged video from Newport of "Yours is My Heart Alone," where the cameras focus overly long on the crowd. Duke Ellington is joined by his 1952 orchestra for his famous arrangement of "Mood Indigo" with its unique introductory blend of bass clarinetist Harry Carney with trombonists Britt Woodman and Quentin Jackson, showcasing Russell Procope's clarinet solo. Carney's long time feature for his majestic baritone sax, "Sophisticated Lady," comes from the same Snader Transcription film. A trio rendition of "Take the A Train" comes from around 1970. Extended performances by the Phil Woods Quartet (with Hal Galper, Steve Gilmore and Bill Goodwin playing "My Old Flame") and Johnny Griffin's robust interpretation of "Monk's Dream" at the Village

Vanguard (with Ronnie Mathews nearly stealing the show) are far superior to the dated experiments of Charles Lloyd and Keith Jarrett's work together, which quickly grow tedious. The Jimmy Smith Trio, the Ahmad Jamal Trio, Thelonious Monk's "Blue Monk" with Ahmed-Abdul Malik and Osie Johnson (from the historic *The Sound of Jazz* special) and an abbreviated blues at Newport by Roland Kirk are also part of this enjoyable volume.


Fortunately, the sound and video is far better preserved on both volumes of *Jazz Voice: The Ladies Who Sing Jazz*. Volume 1 includes an appearance by Ella Fitzgerald on a Toronto television broadcast, singing her trademark novelty tune "A Tisket, A Tasket," the ballad "Imagination" and swinging through "Lady be Good." Sarah Vaughn is also in great form on a pair of broadcasts, though the audio runs slightly ahead of the video during one of them. The four tracks by Carmen McRae are taken from her appearance on *Ralph Gleason's Jazz Casual*; she's full of sass and thoroughly delightful.

June Christy, Peggy Lee, Lena Horne and Helen Humes are featured in material from broadcasts or film clips, including Dizzy Gillespie's amusing mugging and dancing behind Humes in the scat feature "Hey Baba Leba."


Volume 2 is of special interest because of the variety of settings for Billie Holiday. Pianist Mal Waldron and guitarist Mary Osborne are on hand for three tracks, highlighted by "What a Little Moonlight Can Do." "Fine and Mellow" is taken from *The Sound of Jazz* broadcast with Ben Webster, Lester Young, Vic Dickenson, Gerry Mulligan, Coleman Hawkins and Roy Eldridge each taking a solo chorus. Nina Simone is striking accompanying herself on piano for several songs, while Dinah Washington seems bigger than life belting out a mix of pop, blues and standards. Of less interest are film excerpts featuring Ethel Waters and Anita O'Day (heard with Gene Krupa and Roy Eldridge), since they seem like obvious dubs.

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