

RIFFTIDES

Doug Ramsey on jazz and other matters...

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August 24, 2006

DVD

[Jazz Shots From The East Coast, Vols. 1-3, Jazz Shots from the West Coast, Vols. 1-3](#) (EforFilms). The music on these discs is almost uniformly good.

The video ranges from TV quality to grainy film, and no wonder; some of these clips are ancient soundies. There are great rewards here, but be warned: the producers provide no information beyond the names of the leaders and the tunes, unless it was superimposed on the original clip. No dates. No sidemen identification. Who was that marvelous alto saxophonist soloing with Duke Ellington on "Sophisticated Lady?" It was Willie Smith, replacing Johnny Hodges for a time in the early 1950s, but if you don't recognize him, you're out of luck. Fortunately, pianist Ronnie Matthews' name appears on the screen in a marvelous performance of "Monk's Dream" by Johnny Griffin, but that is a rarity. Who was East Coast and who was West Coast may have been decided by a toss of the dice. In the course of the series, Duke Ellington, Art Blakey, Bill Evans, Phil Woods, Jimmy Smith and Thelonious Monk show up in both categories. But pigeon holes don't matter, music does, and for all of their informational faults, these DVDs deliver plenty of it by some of the best players of the twentieth century.

Posted by dramsey at August 24, 2006 01:02 AM

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ABOUT . . .

...Rifftides

This blog is founded on Doug's conviction that musicians and listeners who embrace and understand jazz have interests that run deep, wide and beyond jazz. Music is its principal conce but it reaches past... [more](#)

...Doug Ramsey

Doug lives in the Pacific Northwest, where he settled following a career in print and broadcast journalism in cities including New York, New Orleans, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, Portland, San Antonio, Cleveland and Washington, DC. His writing about jazz has paralleled his life in journalism. [more](#)

...Doug's Books

Doug's most recent book is [Tak Five: The Public and Private Life of Paul Desmond](#). He is also the author of [Jazz Matters: Reflections on the Music and Some of its Makers](#). He contributed to [The Oxford Companion to Jazz](#) and edited [Journalism Ethics: Why Change?](#) His next book is a nov that has almost nothing to do v music.

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DOUG'S PICKS

CD

Sonny Rollins, [Worktime](#) (Prestige). This was recorded n than fifty years ago. It is forev new. At twenty-six, Rollins was of energy and bursting with ide I have never listened to him so

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through "There's No Business L Show Business" and Billy Strayhorn's "Raincheck" without grinning. Max Roach, high on his partnership with Clifford Brown was at his apogee of drumming. Ray Bryant's gorgeous piano solo on "There Are Such Things" is his best ballad playing on record. The bassist, George Morrow, had been working with Rollins and Roach in the Roach-Brown group and locates the Roach-Brown group and locates it powerfully into Rollins' moment. This is a basic repertoire item.

CD

Brian Lynch, [24/7](#) (Nagel Heyer) just caught up with this 2002 album. Lynch teams his trumpet with Miguel Zenon's alto saxophone. The two of them groove with a fine rhythm section of pianist Rick Germanson, bassist Hans Glawischnig and drummer Neal Smith. Everyone plays well, but the prize tracks are Jerome Kern's "Nobody Else but Me" and Louis Armstrong's "West End Blues" and Ellington's barely-known ballad "Azalea." In the Kern, Lynch, using a tight mute, is quick and lyrical (yes, those qualities can go together). In "West End Blues," he nails Armstrong's cadenza operatically and observes the original arrangement, then he, Zenon and Germanson (keep an eye on his play) stunning extended solos before wrapping it up with the celebrated 1928 Armstrong tag.

CD

Andr as Schiff, [Beethoven Piano Sonatas, Volume II, op. 10 and](#) (ECM). If you are a jazz listener who doesn't cotton to what is categorized as "classical" music, you have my sympathy because you won't be hearing this brilliant pianist in the second CD of his projected series of the Beethoven sonatas. Consider relenting. Even you can probably relate to the minor, the famous "Pathetique," but Schiff's magic with the slow movement of the D-major could just convert you entirely. Lucky you. Schiff is one of the supreme pianists of his generation. His first two volumes of the sonatas suggest that his complete set will rank with Richard Goode's among his contemporaries and Arthur Schnabel's among his predecessors. Aside: I can't help wondering if the classically-trained Bill Evans had the first movement of the D-major in mind when he wrote "Waltz for Debby."

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Book

Vivian Perlis and Libby Van Clev *Composers' Voices from Ives to Ellington* (Yale). This is the book that took first place over *Take Five: The Public and Private Lives of Paul Desmond* in the Independent Publishers awards competition. But, no hard feelings only gratitude for a hefty volume that presents oral history in a readable--and listenable--form. The book includes two CDs with many cases, the voices of the composers. Aaron Copeland: "Music needn't be so high-falutin' that it becomes abstract and just pure notes, you know." Duke Ellington: "Everything is so high personalized that you just can't find a category big enough. And 'jazz' certainly isn't big enough. If you wish to know more about Eubie Blake, Mel Powell, Nadia Boulanger, Edgard Varèse or Nicolas Slonimsky, among many others, this is a book for you.

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