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Tuesday, 12 September 2006

Jazz Shots From the East/West Coast, Vols. 2-3

Written by Brent Simon

Saturday, 19 August 2006



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THIS MONTH IN PRINT



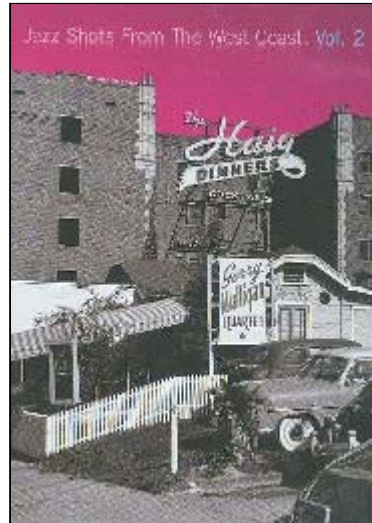
POLLS

What is your favorite genre of videogame?



Fighting (Mortal Kombat, Soul Caliber, etc.)

First-Person Shooters (Halo, Counter



Jazz has been one of America's truly unique and far-ranging inventions, an art form unto itself. And while there have been many regions throughout the country that have contributed to the development of the genre, the coasts have been where a lot of the most timeless evolutions and recordings have been made, ergo the sometimes awkward, sometimes arbitrary divisions of *Jazz Shots From the East Coast* and its left coast partner.

This outstanding continuing series of DVDs pays homage to the two respective coasts and to some of the most important musicians who spent major portions of their careers in one of the two titular hubs. While a great many of these musicians were born in the Midwest or the South and later moved to one of the two coasts, what is taken into account when placing the musician is both where they spent the bulk of their artistic career and where they recorded their most influential works, as well as the nexus of subsequent generations that they in turn influenced. A bit subjective? You bet, but unlikely to start an East Coast/West Coast beef that will take down major players or fans. And hey, if it tricks a few geographical chest-thumpers into discovering more about jazz, I'm all for it.

In *Jazz Shots From the East Coast*, John Coltrane's "Afro Blue" is notable for the way it takes a minor slip in key and bends it into a new clever new phrase, while Miles Davis & the Gil Evans Orchestra give "The Duke," "Blues for Pablo" and "New Rumba" notable workouts. *Mission: Impossible* composer Lalo Schifrin pops up on several numbers tickling ivories, including the Dizzy Gillespie Quintet's "Blues After Dark" and "Lorraine." (And yes, the aforementioned maestro's cheeks still reached comical, bullfrog proportions even back then.) Other standout tracks include the Count Basie Orchestra's "Dickie's Dream," Charlie Parker's "Hothouse," Louis Armstrong's "Someday" and Miles Davis and John Coltrane trading licks on "So What."

Jazz Shots From the West Coast includes plenty of contributions from Teddy Edwards, the under-regarded Wes Montgomery, the Shorty Rogers Quintet and Lester Young (including a nifty rendition of "On the Sunny Side of the Street"), but Stan Kenton's short, sweet "Limehouse Blues" and the Dave Brubeck Quartet's "Take Five" and "(It's a Raggy Waltz)" leave a lasting impression as well.

Packaged in regular Amray cases, each disc in the *Jazz Shots* series comes keyed in its own color, and is presented in 1.33:1 full frame. Though frequently lacking in crispness of image, the transfers are generally pretty good in terms of grain, and some of the footage is in color and some in black-and-white. The artistry on display also varies pretty widely; evocative close-ups and fade ins and outs stud the Jimmy Smith Trio's "Walk on the Wild Side" and a few other tracks, while others are shot in straightforward, pedestrian fashion. Unfortunately, there aren't any supplemental bonus features to round out these titles, but they are – individually and collectively – superb and engaging treats, either as introductions to jazz or valentines for longtime fans. B+ (Shows) C- (Disc)

- Strike, etc.)
- Role-Playing (includes MMOs)
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