

## CADENCE | JAN - FEB - MAR 2009

So much for the Jazz Icons series, but not necessarily for bona fide Jazz icons, one of which is available on **ART TATUM, THE ART OF JAZZ PIANO** (MVD VISUAL 53), wherein the iconic pianist's life (1910-1956) is outlined and his artistry explored, with commentary by a bevy of talking heads, wonderfully appropriate black and white stills, all with Tatum recordings playing underneath. And there are three sequences in which we actually witness Tatum playing. The first of these is a snippet with his trio (Tiny Grimes, g; Slam Stewart, b.), the second a longer excerpt in which he plays solo, and the third his appearance in a jam session scene from a feature film, "The Fabulous Dorseys," in which he is seen at the piano, in the midst of a group which includes both Dorsey brothers, Charlie Barnet, Ziggy Elman, et al. Are we actually hearing this group play in real time or has there been some soundtrack finagling? Among the commentators, which include Eddie Barefield, Hank Jones, Maurice Waller (Fats' son), Milt Hinton, Karl Tatum (Art's younger brother), and Arnold Laubich (author of *Art Tatum: A Guide To His Recorded Work*), there are three standouts—Dick Hyman, who sits at the piano and demonstrates some of Tatum's "tricks" of technique and makes the case for a direct Tatum/Charlie Parker connection, Paul Machlin, an academic, author of a book about Fats Waller, who is most interesting on the subject of Tatum's roots in Stride piano, and, finally, guitarist Les Paul, who tells a wonderful story about Tatum's solution to playing on a piano which had seriously defective keys. This is a lively, informative, and thoroughly enjoyable hour spent in the company of Art Tatum and some of his contemporaries. Time: 1 hour - B&W and Color.