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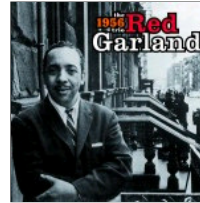


## The 1956 Trio

Red Garland | Essential Jazz Classics

By [Eric J. Iannelli](#)

By the time pianist Red Garland recorded the amalgam of tracks on this essential disc, he'd been playing with the [Miles Davis](#) Quintet for about a year. Although he had performed alongside big names before, including [Charlie Parker](#) and [Lester Young](#), The Quintet (as it would come to be known) was truly an all-star lineup: Garland, plus [John Coltrane](#), [Philly Joe Jones](#) and [Paul Chambers](#). Garland--with a modest profile in 1955 that would more or less remain that way--reached a career peak around this time; maybe because of the musical company he kept, or, perhaps, because he would have regardless.



The first twelve tracks on *The 1956 Trio* are taken from *A Garland of Red* (Prestige, 1956) in its entirety, with the rest cherry-picked from a mix of 1956 and '57 sessions on *Groovy* (Prestige, 1957) and *Red Garland's Piano* (Prestige, 1957). Garland is joined by Quintet-mate Chambers, as well as drummer [Art Taylor](#). This was a peak period for Taylor, too; he would record extensively with Garland and Coltrane over the next three years--retreating, soon after, into life as a European-based touring musician. On the final of this baker's dozen tracks, Taylor is replaced by Philly Joe Jones.

The trio is in full swing from the get-go, springing into "A Foggy Day," which proceeds like a sprightly walk down a decidedly un-foggy street. After the head, Garland solos almost immediately--impressive, without being ostentatious. Chambers follows with something sly and soulful, before Garland steps in again. Taylor is skipped (a theme throughout), but compensates with swift brushwork--his timekeeping almost mechanical in its precision.

"My Romance" slows things down, the individual vibrations of the notes comprising Garland's familiar block chord style made crystal clear. Taylor is on brushes again, and Chambers bows the last few notes for a beautiful close. He picks up the bow again for his solo on "What Is This Thing Called Love?," playfully quoting "I Can't Believe That You're in Love with Me." Lest someone accuse the trio of sentimentality, there's the bluesy, laidback "Makin' Whoopee," a nice counterpart to the soporific "Little Girl Blue" that comes later. More blues come in the form of "Blue Red," with an intro solo from Chambers that epitomizes cool.

The disc ends with "Ahmad's Blues," originally a trio piece from Miles Davis Quintet's *Workin'* (Prestige, 1959). It's a fantastic finish, as well as a fitting homage of sorts to Jamal, who had a considerable influence on Garland--though not considerable enough for Davis, who once demanded that he "play like Jamal."

It would be easy to describe *The 1956 Trio* as a snapshot in time when Garland was at his finest as a leader, flanked by outstanding performers. But "snapshot" would be a misleading word. The vibe here is anything but static. Timeless perhaps. But never, ever static.

**Track Listing:** A Foggy Day; My Romance; What is This Thing Called Love?; Makin' Whoopee; September in the Rain; Little Girl Blue; Blue Red; Constellation; Willow, Weep for Me; If I Were a Bell; I Know Why; What Can I Say?; Ahmad's Blues.

**Personnel:** Red Garland: piano; Paul Chambers: bass; Philly Joe Jones: drums (13); Art Taylor: drums (1-12).

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