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Solos: The Jazz Sessions - Lee Konitz

Score: **90%**
Rating: **Not Rated**
Publisher: **MVD Entertainment Group**
Region: **A**
Media: **DVD/1**
Running Time: **50 Mins.**
Genre: **Live Performance/TV Series/Musical**
Audio: **English Stereo Sound**

Features:

Songs:

Thinkin'
Carey's Trance
The Rebirth of Cool
Subconscious
Cherokee
What's New

Bonus: Preview of **Solos: The Jazz Sessions** - Andrew Hill



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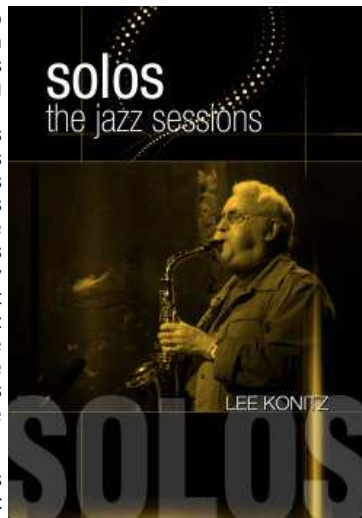
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Lee Konitz remains a fixture in jazz after so many of his contemporaries have passed through this mortal veil, many due to old age and others due to poor health and the often related drug addiction. **Solos: The Jazz Sessions** is a long-running series from Canada that features Konitz and others playing solo in Toronto's resplendent Berkeley Church. The marvelous thing about featuring Konitz is that his instrument, saxophone, isn't one that we typically think of as great for solo work. Solos against a rhythm section, maybe, but any single-note instrument is going to sound a bit lonely without some accompaniment. Konitz manages to sound bright and full without anyone playing alongside him, and his mastery of the music he plays makes it clear that understands the underlying harmonic structure of these songs.

Konitz and Tristano are two names that jazz fans will associate, but Konitz was incredibly prolific as a leader and sideman. There aren't many epochs of jazz that he didn't touch over the years, beginning with the bop movement that spawned great names like Parker and Gillespie. Konitz touched a different nerve with his clean, lyrical playing; he fell more under the Lester Young school of saxophone than the influence of Coleman Hawkins' brash, muscular style. Perfect emblems of the so-called cool style that Konitz is probably best known for playing come across here in standards like *Cherokee* and *What's New*. The former is a model of tuneful, rambling bop, with swinging rhythms evident at all times. The latter is full of lyrical lines and melodic hints, but few direct references other than intervals to evoke the original melody.

Solos: The Jazz Sessions - Lee Konitz is a portrait of a man that has seriously evolved his musical style. There is some talking between musical segments, mostly narration by Konitz explaining how he feels his playing has changed and how he maintains his skill on the horn. There are some breathy moments and clipped lines that betray his age, but Konitz puts some serious passion into his playing. Critics of cool jazz as too intellectual and formal may use a tune like *Subconscious* to bolster their argument, but the soulful tune, *The Rebirth of Cool* is probably the most experimental and raw of this session. Konitz clearly has paid attention during the growth of jazz music, and doesn't leave anything out of his playing. He seems equally comfortable singing through his horn and using tone-hole tapping as he does trading fours with himself on a song like *Carey's Trance*. The song that rounds out the session, *Thinkin'* is an unrestrained wail, the kind of thing you could imagine floating through




a noir movie set on some cloudy city night.


The only things we didn't always love about **Solos: The Jazz Sessions - Lee Konitz** were the rather overactive camera work, often panning and dissolving too quickly for our taste. The line one walks between intentionally using various camera angles to create emotion and unintentionally creating vertigo is thinner than most people allow. After the first tune, things settle down a bit, and the quick edits aren't as apparent. The music speaks clearly, and watching Konitz's face while he plays is most interesting. When the camera pulls back to show the amazing surroundings, we are always thrilled, but more steady and sustained shots on Konitz would have been appreciated. The quality of the filming and the sound quality absolutely rules. Jazz fans won't find a better way to experience their heroes than here, and Konitz is a player that deserves more notice as a mainstay of this music for the past half century. Highly recommended.

-Fridtjof, GameVortex Communications AKA Matt Paddock

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