



Andrew Hill

Solos: The Jazz Sessions (MVD Visual)

Naxos' latest Jazz Icons series has arrived with another terrific batch of live club and concert performances filmed in glorious black and white for European TV between 1962 and 1970. The hourlong Paris set by drummer Art Blakey and his unrecorded New Jazzmen is noteworthy for the brilliant playing of young Freddie Hubbard, who really stretches out on several amazing trumpet flights. It's a real treat watching the Father of Jazz Saxophone, Coleman Hawkins, display his mastery on two different sets, the second of which features ex-Basie-ites trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison and drummer "Papa" Jo Jones. The biggest surprise here may be the frenetic performance by bandleader Woody Herman & His Swinging Herd. Not the most soulful of big bands, they swing furiously nonetheless. Anita O'Day is a sheer delight, demonstrating an innate feel for the music that made her one of the best jazz singers ever. Jimmy Smith created the template for B-3 organists, and he simply tears it up on a swingin', soulful trio date from Paris. Masters of American Music is a uniformly excellent documentary series profiling immortal jazz figures Count Basie, John Coltrane, Billie Holiday, Thelonious Monk, and Charlie Parker. Originally broadcast in the 1980s and 1990s, these fascinating and absorbing docs offer priceless stills and video footage, plus insightful interviews with scores of musicians. The music, given cultural and historical context, speaks for itself. The Coltrane set in particular features a very rare live outdoor performance that glimpses 'Trane in full, majestic flight. Enigmatic pianist/composer Andrew Hill is spotlighted in an intimate performance as part of the Solos: The Jazz Sessions series. The late, Chicago-born pianist's spare, cerebral style is rapturous.