



**Red Sparkle**  
**Jeff Hamilton Trio (Capri)**  
 by Ken Dryden

Arriving on the jazz scene in the mid '70s, Jeff Hamilton has built an extensive resumé that stacks up against most drummers. He worked as a sideman on recordings by Monty Alexander, Benny Carter, Milt Jackson, Ray Brown, Woody Herman, the LA Four, George Shearing and Mel Tormé, in addition to being a co-leader in the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra and a member of the Clayton Brothers Quartet. *Red Sparkle* is Hamilton's tenth album as a leader and second with up-and-coming pianist Tamir Hendelman and bassist Christoph Luty.

Always a masterful percussionist, Hamilton's sensitivity keeps his young sidemen on edge, especially with fine brushwork in his samba-flavored arrangement of Thelonious Monk's "Bye Ya". He salutes Ray Brown by interpreting the late bassist's little known ballad "I Know You So Well", a showcase for Hendelman's spacious, touching piano and Luty's warm arco, with the leader providing soft accents with brushes. There are also several fresh looks at standards: the spry arrangement of "Too Marvelous For Words" incorporates a number of delicious bop detours and terrific interplay; a gorgeous, dreamy setting of "Laura" focuses on Hendelman's shimmering piano while the bass and brushes introduction to "A Sleepin' Bee" captures the whimsical nature of this old chestnut. Not many jazz artists have explored the music of singer-songwriter Stephen Bishop, yet the trio's interpretation of his 1977 hit single "On and On", particularly Hamilton's adept switching between mallets and brushes, reveals a hidden gem.

Each member of the trio contributes originals. Hamilton's title track is an uptempo bop vehicle while his "Ain't That a Peach" has the soulful swagger of the late pianist Gene Harris. Hamilton and Hendelman collaborated on the punchy "Hat's Dance" while Luty's jaunty blues "In An Ellington" suggests the music of Ellington's trio dates of the early '60s.

For more information, visit [caprirecords.com](http://caprirecords.com)



**Illumination!/Dear John C.**  
**Elvin Jones (Impulse-Verve)**  
 by Tom Conrad

First the bad news. This CD is a perfect example of how *not* to produce a jazz reissue. There are no new liner notes and no bonus tracks. The original (goofy) liner notes are printed, but in tiny type requiring a magnifying glass. Only some of the original liner photos are reproduced, poorly. Virtually no supporting documentation is provided. This is a package thrown together on the cheap.

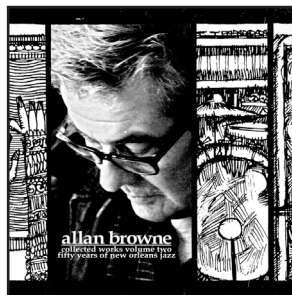
Now the good news. The music is mostly powerful, fascinating, unique and important and you get two nearly complete Elvin Jones albums for the price of

one. (Impulse calls it the "2-on-1" series.)

*Illumination!*, recorded in 1963, was originally credited to the "Elvin Jones/Jimmy Garrison Sextet". It was Garrison's only recording as a (co)leader. The rhythm section is John Coltrane's (McCoy Tyner is here) and the frontline is hellacious: Sonny Simmons, Prince Lasha, Charles Davis. The genre is postbop in the early stages of exploding into free jazz. On "Nuttin' Out Jones", Simmons takes perhaps the wildest, most exhaustive English horn solo in the history of jazz in the left channel while Jones detonates bombs in the right. Simmons is also maniacally melodic on alto saxophone on Garrison's "Gettin' on Way". Davis is guttural and eloquent on his own tunes "Half and Half" and "Just Us Blues". Simmons' odd "Aborigine Dance in Scotland" contains a Jones solo like a Ph.D. dissertation on the cultural ramifications of rhythm.

Other than the presence of Jones, *Dear John C.* has nothing to do with *Illumination!*. It is a quartet date from 1965, with Charlie Mariano on alto saxophone, Richard Davis on bass and either Hank Jones or Roland Hanna on piano. After the imaginative daring of *Illumination!*, it sounds almost quaint. Yet Mariano, in his early 40s and on top of his game, plays with exceptional creativity and finesse, in a sound penetrating and pure. He kills Mingus' "Love Bird" and this "Everything Happens to Me" may be the second-best alto saxophone version of that song (the best was by Art Pepper, who turned it into halting existential autobiography), surprisingly bright and fast over a monumental bass walk by Davis, who also takes a quintessential Davis deadpan solo, full of shuddering double stops. Jones is much more restrained on this album, but even a restrained Elvin Jones sounds dangerous.

For more information, visit [impulse50.com](http://impulse50.com)



**Collected Works, Vol. Two**  
**(Fifty Years of New Orleans Jazz)**  
**Allan Browne (Newmarket Music)**  
 by Alex Henderson

Allan Browne is one of Australia's jazz survivors. The Melbourne-based Dixieland/Swing drummer and vocalist has battled alcoholism, survived emphysema and had a lung transplant, yet, at 67, remains quite active in Australia's jazz scene. This 50-minute retrospective CD, which spans 1964-2008, looks back on Browne's long career with enjoyable results.

The selections are generally solid and range from early material with the Red Onion Jazz Band (including studio recordings of Duke Ellington's "East St. Louis Toodle-oo" and King Oliver's "Snake Rag" and rare live performances of Slim & Slam's "Flat Foot Floogie" and Jelly Roll Morton's "Billy Goat Stomp") to "William St. Ramble" and "Fat Wallaby Rag" (both Dixieland originals by Browne) from the 2000s. Although most of *Collected Works, Vol. Two* is devoted to Dixieland and Swing, there are some exceptions. The funky "Souled Out" (with Browne's wife Margie Lou Dyer on vocals) is soul jazz and on "Ford Dealer's Son from Deni", Browne gets into some country-style rapping along the lines of Commander Cody's "Hot Rod Lincoln" (albeit with an Australian accent). Meanwhile, the goofy "Buzzin' Wasp" starts out as a blend of free jazz and spoken word before it segues into Dixieland.

Browne clearly admires the humor that Fats Waller, Louis Armstrong and many others favored

during jazz' pre-bebop era and doesn't hesitate to let his wackier side prevail on "Buzzin' Wasp" as well as "Fat Wallaby Rag" and "He's Not Much, But He's All He Thinks About" (which has some laughs at the expense of a man who is as self-absorbed as he is unimpressive).

Because it contains as many rarities as it does (including some previously unreleased material), *Collected Works, Vol. Two* may not be appropriate for someone who is checking out Browne for the first time. But it's a pleasing and often fun listen if one has more than a casual interest in the Aussie's long career.

For more information, visit [newmarketmusic.com](http://newmarketmusic.com)

ON DVD

**Live At Blues Alley**  
**Max Roach (MVD Visual)**  
 by George Kanzler

This video, shot with exquisite simplicity during a set at DC's Blues Alley in 1981, captures drummer Max Roach's Quartet - a band he led off and on for decades - at its best, displaying a diverse set ranging from bebop to New Orleans to jazz waltz and including two of his famous set-piece solo works. The quartet features trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater and tenor saxophonist Odean Pope, along with bassist Calvin Hill.

The set begins with "Big Sid", Roach's homage to Big Sid Catlett, the great Swing Era drummer. Based on a repetition and elaboration of a basic rhythmic pattern/riff, the piece demonstrates the logic and precision that Roach brought to his solos and drum kit, contrasting and balancing individual elements (drum heads, cymbals) to create melodic and harmonic as well as tonal/timbral effects. The set closes, an hour later, with another homage to a Swing Era drummer, Papa Jo Jones, Roach playing "Mr. Hi-Hat" exclusively on the hi-hat cymbal with sticks, often at whirlwind speed.

Introducing the first band number, Roach recalls how Charlie Parker would call the fastest bebop tune as the opener of his first set, insuring that "we'd all be struggling." The band then plays Roach's quicksilver "It's Time", Bridgewater's fleet solo shadowed by wailing, honking obbligati from Pope's tenor. "St. James Infirmary", from the pre-Swing New Orleans jazz era follows, Bridgewater using his cupped hand on the bell to create wah-wah effects, Roach creating a shuffling second line beat with snare against cymbals. The band also plays a jazz waltz, "Effie", and the virtuosic "Nommo", a piece with contrapuntal rhythms and precisely modulated dynamics dropping to sotto voce whispers and rising to trap set crescendos.

With the focus squarely on the bandstand, often on Roach in the center, this video is a good closeup of the drummer in action. Roach is a calm, secure presence, like the eye of a hurricane in the middle of his trap set, which he keeps close to him and fairly low, so he rarely has to raise his hands above his elbows, which stay close to his body. He's all efficiency, economy in motion.

For more information, visit [mvd2b.com](http://mvd2b.com)