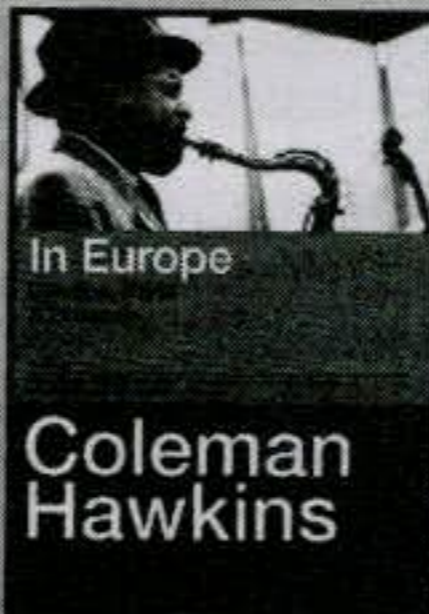


ON DVD



In Europe: London, Paris & Brussels
Coleman Hawkins (Impro Jazz)
by George Kanzler

In the '20s, Coleman Hawkins (1904-69) established the tenor sax as a prominent soloing option in jazz, creating the first template for the dominant sound of the instrument. The powerful tone, deep swagger and churning rococo harmonic attack of his approach continued to be an influence long after it was eclipsed by the smoother, thinner toned, more rubato style of Lester Young and the further innovations of the still-omnipresent influence of the late John Coltrane. But Hawkins was no hide-bound traditionalist; throughout his career he embraced new ideas in jazz, actually leading the first bebop recording session and employing many younger, questing musicians in his later years.

This collection of videos from 1956-62, and one short film of bonus tracks from 1961, again emphasizes how important European television is in the preservation of moving images of pioneering and iconic jazz artists during a period when American media was fixated on pop and rock. And Hawkins isn't the only iconic jazz star captured on these tracks. He's joined in different frontlines by trumpeters Harry "Sweets" Edison and Roy Eldridge and alto saxophonist Benny Carter. Most illuminating of all, from a visual standpoint, is the inclusion of two long solos by master drummers "Papa" Jo Jones and Louie Bellson, full of close-ups that should be invaluable to both aspiring and journeyman drummers.

Hawkins set the standard for extended improvising on ballads with his 1939 recording of "Body and Soul" and he shows he was still a master of the form on his variations on "September Song" from a 1964 session with Edison, Jones, bassist Jimmy Woode and pianist Sir Charles Thompson in London. In 1948 Hawkins pioneered the solo (a cappella) sax performance with his "Picasso" and here we're treated to a similar solo performance, "Blowing for Adolphe Sax", from a quintet session in Brussels in 1962. The two sax titans, Hawkins and Carter, mix it up enjoyably on "Blue Lou", as do Hawkins and Edison on the latter's "Centerpiece". A ringer in these tracks is guitarist Mickey Baker, of R&B Mickey & Sylvia fame, on the Brussels session.

For more information, visit mvd2b.com