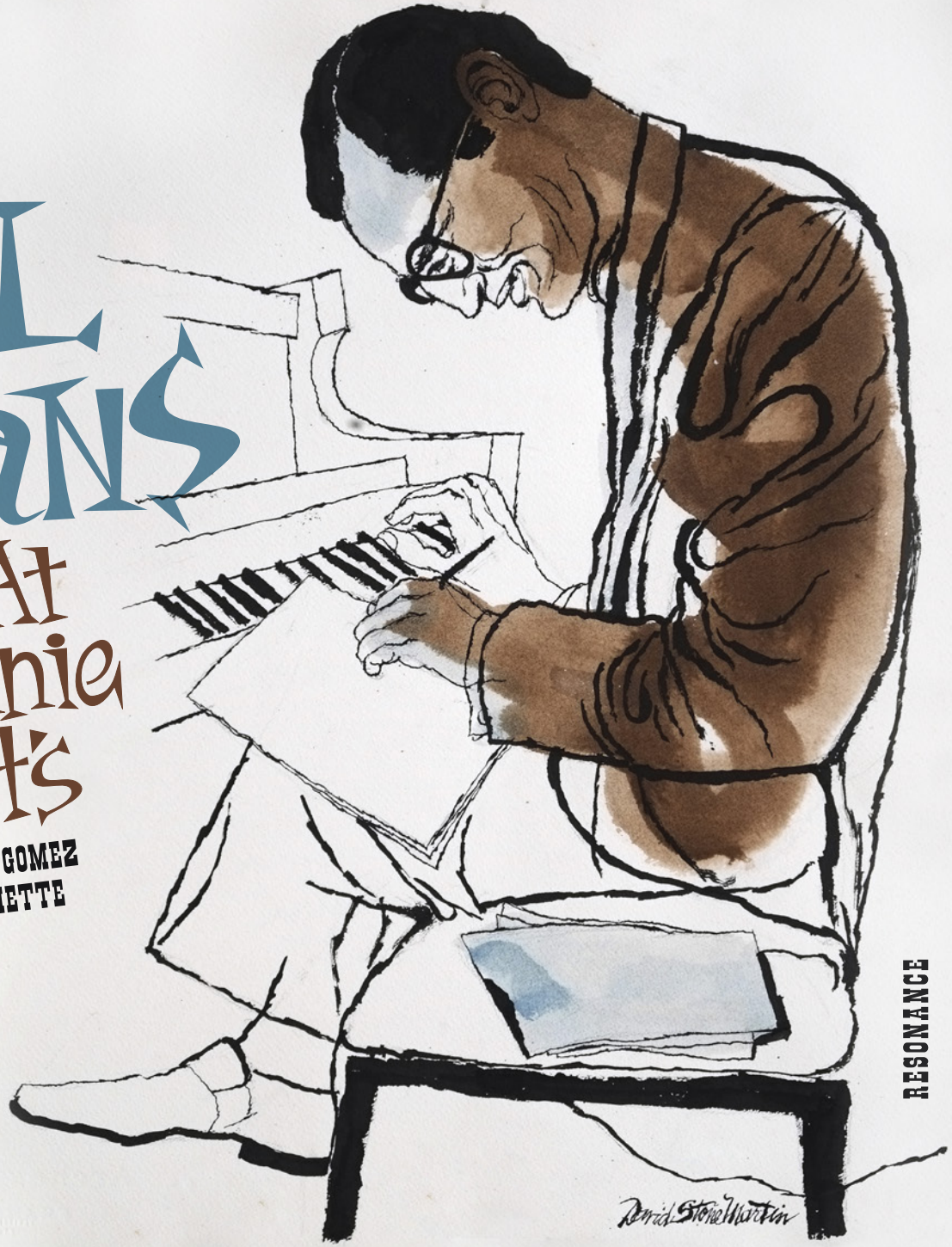
BILL EVANS

Live At Ronnie Scott's

with EDDIE GOMEZ
JACK DeJOHNETTE



RESONANCE

BILL EVANS piano
EDDIE GOMEZ bass
JACK DeJOHNETTE drums

1. **A SLEEPIN' BEE** (4:58)
Capote, Arlen / Harwin Music Corp. (ASCAP)

2. **YOU'RE GONNA HEAR FROM ME** Version 1 (3:01)
A. Previn, D. Previn / Warner Bros., Inc. (Warner Bros. Music Division) (ASCAP)

3. **YESTERDAYS** (4:53)
J. Kern, O. Harbach / Universal Polygram International Publishing Inc. (ASCAP)

4. **TURN OUT THE STARS** (4:46)
B. Evans / Ludlow Music Inc. (BMI)

5. **MY MAN'S GONE NOW** (5:53)
G. Gershwin, I. Gershwin, D. Heyward, D. Kuhns / Dubose and Dorothy Heyward Memorial Fund Pub., Frankie G. Songs, Nokawi Music (ASCAP)

6. **EMILY** Version 1 (4:46)
J. Mandel, J. Mercer / Primary Wave Songs (ASCAP)

7. **SPRING IS HERE** (4:59)
R. Rodgers, L. Hart / EMI Robbins Catalog Inc. (ASCAP)

8. **EMBRACEABLE YOU** (5:58)
G. Gershwin, I. Gershwin / W.B. Music Corp. (ASCAP), Ira Gershwin Music (NS)

9. **FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE** (4:25)
E. Bretton, S. Edwards, D. Meyer / Songs of Universal Inc. (BMI)

10. **SOMEDAY MY PRINCE WILL COME** (6:27)
F. Churchill, L. Morey / Bourne Co. (ASCAP)

11. **QUIET NOW** (5:49)
D. Zeitlen / Ludlow Music Inc. (BMI)

12. **'ROUND MIDNIGHT** (6:53)
T. Monk, B. Hanighen, C. Williams / Thelonious Music Corp., Ultra Empire Music (BMI), Warner Bros. Inc. (Warner Bros. Music Div.) (ASCAP)

13. **STELLA BY STARLIGHT** (3:57)
N. Washington, V. Young / Catharine Washington Hinen, Sony ATV Harmony (ASCAP)

14. **ALFIE** (5:24)
B. Bacharach, H. David / Sony ATV Harmony (ASCAP)

15. **YOU'RE GONNA HEAR FROM ME** Version 2 (3:21)
A. Previn, D. Previn / Warner Bros., Inc. (Warner Bros. Music Division) (ASCAP)

16. **VERY EARLY** (5:00)
B. Evans / Folkways Music Publishers, Inc. (BMI)

17. **EMILY** Version 2 (4:14)
J. Mandel, J. Mercer / Primary Wave Songs (ASCAP)

18. **WALTZ FOR DEBBY** (4:57)
B. Evans / Folkways Music Publishers, Inc. (BMI)

19. **AUTUMN LEAVES** (4:34)
J. Kosma, J. Mercer, J. Prevert / Enoch and Cie (SACEM), Morley Music Co. (ASCAP)

20. **NARDIS** (5:21)
M. Davis / Jazz Horn Music Corporation (BMI)

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FROM UPSTATE NEW YORK TO SWINGING LONDON

by Zev Feldman

Live at Ronnie Scott's marks the fifth collaboration by Resonance Records and the Bill Evans Estate on official releases of previously unheard Bill Evans recordings and the third Resonance release with this particular trio. Once again, as seems often to be the case with the discovery of formerly unknown jazz treasures, there's a story behind the way the Bill Evans Trio's Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club recordings came to light over 50 years after they were made.

In 2013, my colleague and associate, Steven Reich, introduced me to the family of Hans Georg Brunner-Schwer. This introduction led eventually to Resonance's 2016 release of *Some Other Time* by the same Bill Evans Trio as is featured on this album. HGBS oversaw the original recording sessions for *Some Other Time,* which he recorded in MPS's legendary studio in the Black Forest in 1968, shortly before the material on this album was recorded in London. In the course of interviewing Jack DeJohnette for *Some Other Time*, as is my practice, I asked him if he had any interesting tapes. To my surprise, he told me he had recordings of the Bill Evans Trio from the now-legendary engagement at Ronnie Scott's, but that the audio was quite poor. Of course, this piqued my interest, but at that time, it seemed clear that the recording was not up to our technical standards for release.

The Bill Evans Ronnie Scott's engagement had already been spoken about in jazz circles as something special. After we released *Some Other Time*, I fielded a number of inquiries from fans who were aware that Bill, Eddie and Jack had played for four weeks at Ronnie Scott's not long after *Some Other Time* was recorded. They wanted to know if recordings of the Ronnie Scott's engagement existed, and if so, whether we would put them out.

People who actually heard the trio during their month-long residency at the club reported that Bill and the trio were especially cohesive and expansive; they were able to settle in with a comfort level that's hard to achieve in a succession of one-nighters. Jazz aficionados heard stories about how great the trio's performances there had been and Bill Evans's 1968 Ronnie Scott's performances became the stuff of legend.

It wasn't until 2018, thanks again to Steven Reich, who reintroduced me to Jack and Lydia DeJohnette, that they invited me to their home in Upstate New York to look through their tape archive. I wasn't sure what we were going to find, but it was wonderful to spend time with Jack, Lydia and their godson Matthew Garrison (the son of legendary bassist Jimmy Garrison), who along with Craig (Santi) Santiago were instrumental in preserving, cataloging, sorting, organizing, and moving tapes from Jack's personal archives. Over the next nine months, I made a number of trips to Jack's and Lydia's place. On the first visit, Jack played me some of the Bill Evans Trio's performances at Ronnie Scott's he'd recorded 50 years earlier.

Unfortunately, because of the nature of the audio we heard upon first listening in 2016, we thought the tapes weren't usable. It turned out, however, that we hadn't been listening to them correctly, and we discovered that what we'd been trying to listen to were actually multitrack tape recordings and the setup we'd been trying to listen on hadn't allowed us to hear all the tracks. Once we got that sorted, it was amazing to hear the music come alive. These performances were inspired! It was a thrilling discovery for everyone involved and I'm now very excited to be able to present it to the world.

For this album package, thanks to Georges Braunschweig of GM Press in Switzerland, we're presenting a handful of never-before-published photographs by Francois Jacquenod of Bill Evans, Eddie Gomez and Jack DeJohnette from June of 1968. We've also gathered some very special voices of people who had relevant and very personal observations to share. We begin with a detailed essay from the acclaimed author and pianist, Brian Priestley, who, in fact was present at Ronnie Scott's during this Bill Evans engagement and who wrote about the performances for the British publication, *Jazz Monthly,* and also for *DownBeat* in the U.S. Next, we have a conversation between Jack DeJohnette and his longtime friend and musical partner, piano legend Chick Corea. Jack and Chick reflect on Bill as an important and historical musical force, as well as this music, in particular. We also present my conversation with the extraordinary bassist, Eddie Gomez, who played with Bill longer than any other trio partner.

I also wanted to include some observations regarding the fantastic cover to this album, a piece by the esteemed artist, David Stone Martin, so I've included a reflection on the cover image and how we came to be able to present it. Finally, in 2017, I had the rare opportunity to have a wide-ranging conversation with actor/comedian/jazz lover Chevy Chase at his home in upstate New York. Chevy reminisced about his friendship with Bill Evans, as well as his experiences with many other figures who might be said to make up a Mount Rushmore of jazz.

I'd be remiss if I didn't thank my co-producer, the great Jack DeJohnette and Lydia DeJohnette for bringing this recording to me and for being so wonderful to work with. And, of course, I also want to thank Simon Cooke, Paul Pace and everyone at Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club, who have been so helpful to us with this project.

Finally, let me say again that it's truly a thrill to be able to present this previously-unissued music by one of the most important iterations of the Bill Evans Trio recorded at one of the most famous jazz clubs in the world, Ronnie Scott's. Although I never got to visit its original location in Soho it feels as if I'm taking the time machine back to "Swinging London" in the 1960s by way of these recordings. I hope you enjoy the trip as much as I do.

Bill Evans/© Francois Jacquenod for GM Press

"WHEN BILL EVANS IS IN TOWN, ONE GOES NOT SO MUCH TO LISTEN AS TO WORSHIP."

by Brian Priestley

For me, there never can be enough Bill Evans. It's beginning to look as if there can never be enough Bill for Resonance Records, either. This is their fifth such release, and what's more exciting is that everything Resonance has released to date has been previously unknown and unreleased material. It's even the second Resonance set to have been recorded at the same iconic London venue, Ronnie Scott's, and it's their third release to feature the short-lived edition of Evans's trio that included the young Jack DeJohnette on drums. This particular album, however, holds a special place in my heart, since I saw the trio at the venue and even wrote about it at the time.

When Ronnie's opened in 1959, the cramped basement in what soon became London's Chinatown was a venue for UK musicians to play and hang out. It only ventured into the booking of American guest soloists two years later, when Zoot Sims's residency heralded a long list; mostly of saxophonists (Scott himself was a noted tenor player). It was therefore a momentous occasion when in March 1965, Scott took advantage of their European tour to book his first all-American group, namely the Bill Evans Trio with bassist Chuck Israels and drummer Larry Bunker, for a stay of four weeks.

The general policy of visiting soloist plus UK rhythm-section continued to hold sway—I particularly recall Art Farmer, Freddie Hubbard, Jim Hall, Yusef Lateef, Sonny Rollins and Ben Webster at this period. But the club's move to more spacious premises a couple of blocks away in late 1966 increased the viability (and perhaps the necessity) of bringing in organized groups such as the Horace Silver quintet, Ornette Coleman's trio and even the new Buddy Rich band. Then in mid-1968 on the back of his Montreux festival appearance, it was time for another residency by Bill Evans, who would continue to visit with regularity until the month before his death in September of 1980.

Having myself been bowled over by seeing the 1965 trio, both at the club and at a BBC television recording—and having written about it in the UK publication *Jazz Monthly*—it felt important to comment on this new band, which I duly did in *DownBeat*. My review opened with a heartfelt comment, later quoted, not only in Peter Pettinger's Evans biography, *How My Heart Sings*, but in published folios of

Evans compositions, where it was attributed to London's *Times* newspaper rather than *DownBeat* ("When Bill Evans is in town, one goes not so much to listen as to worship").

Hearing Eddie Gomez live for the first time, I commented enthusiastically that his playing was in some respects superior to that of the style-setting Scott LaFaro, thinking especially of his articulation, his intonation and the marrying of his conception with that of Evans. The equally young Jack DeJohnette had already played a London concert the previous year in the Charles Lloyd quartet, but I was captivated by the way his colorful playing seemed to energize the pianist.

It's important to mention one other aspect of this trio's four-week stint at Ronnie's, namely its influence on the London scene and specific musicians in particular. I can't recall hearing anything similar about the activities of Evans's sidemen in 1965, but now there was significant interaction. In fact, Gomez even recorded an album in London, *Phil Seamen Meets Eddie Gomez*, in which he and the powerful British bebop drummer were joined by mainstream pianist Tony Lee.

My Ronnie-Scott's writeup mentioned in passing that Jack DeJohnette had sat in with the British group whose job it was to back singer Elaine Delmar on two sets a night alternating with Evans and to open the evening as a piano trio. The sitting-in became a regular fixture when Jack brought along his melodica (which later featured on his own debut album recorded at the end of 1968) and he referred to it in a contemporary interview for the UK's *Crescendo* magazine: "They're all great players that I've been doing the first set with every night—Dave Holland, [drummer] John Marshall, [pianist] Pat Smythe. And especially the guitarist, John McLaughlin—he's fantastic."

DeJohnette was not alone in his appreciation, for on the night of July . . .ertain Miles Davis visited the club escorted by Philly Joe Jones, the ex-Davis ex-Evans drummer, then living in London. It was Joe who passed on the message for Dave Holland to contact Miles's management with a view to joining Miles's band, which he duly did. Similarly, John McLaughlin, who wasn't on these opening sets but took part in daytime sessions with DeJohnette, found that Jack (who'd recently filled in for Tony Williams with Miles) subsequently played a recording of the guitarist to Williams. Williams then brought McLaughlin to NYC to play in his new group, Lifetime, and to record alongside him on Miles's *In A Silent Way*.

It may also have been on this visit that DeJohnette first got to know British saxophonist John Surman, who had appeared at the same Montreux Festival with Mike Westbrook and who would later partner with Jack on a duo tour. And indeed, Bill Evans himself, while not hanging out to the same extent, made the acquaintance of local drummer (and frequent Ronnie's employee) Tony Oxley—not only sending him out-takes from his Fall 1968 album *Alone* but employing him on some 1972 European dates. Meanwhile, Evans was clearly delighted with his current collaborators.

Describing them to *Crescendo* he said of Gomez, who by then had been with him for a couple of years, that "Eddie is a very vigorous bass player." Pianist and broadcaster Marian McPartland also spoke to Evans as he and his wife Ellaine stayed on in London after the Ronnie's engagement. In an interview published under the *Melody Maker* headline, "Bill Evans, genius or cocktail pianist?" she asked Bill about DeJohnette. Bill responded, "He's really stimulating. He fits in beautifully, filling in in a different way. He's a very creative person, plays piano himself and so he has a melodic approach. As a matter of fact, he's getting me off my musical ass." Unfortunately, of course, Miles soon called on DeJohnette to replace Tony Williams full-time, but his playing here is the most dynamic documentation of his work with Bill Evans.

The opening 1950s show-tune "A Sleepin' Bee" had been in Bill's repertoire in the mid-'60s but possibly not again until his Montreux performance. A recent blogpost by bassist/educator Ronan Guilfoyle mentions that the afternoon television rehearsal for that concert was witnessed by Irish drummer John Wadham, who noted the absence of written music despite some tunes being unfamiliar to his sidemen. Guilfoyle comments: "It's fascinating to realize that Evans, a man given to using many preconceived structures in his compositions, nonetheless preferred to demonstrate the music verbally in rehearsal."

"You're Gonna Hear from Me," written to be mimed by Natalie Wood in the 1965 movie *Inside Daisy Clover* and heard here in a relatively short version, was regularly played by Evans both before and after this London stint. The sprightly "Yesterdays," on the other hand, seems unique in Evans's trio output, and might be his response to a request from a fan of Bill's *Further Conversations with Myself*. It sees Gomez hitting on a repeated rhythmic figure in his solo and Evans tossing some interesting harmonic extensions around the key-cycle.

"Turn Out the Stars," first unveiled at Bill's 1966 Town Hall concert, was a moving requiem for his late father, a 40-bar melody which takes a haunting four-note phrase through several keys. (Oddly enough, some decades later, Charlie Haden emphasized exactly the same pitches and the first temporary key-change in his 16-bar tune "Nightfall"). Evans plays lead throughout this performance and the slowing of the final bars seems more organic than the agonizingly long *rallentando* of later versions when Bill himself was close to death.

His involvement with the song "My Man's Gone Now" dates back at least to 1961 and might conceivably have been inspired by Miles Davis's *Porgy and Bess* album. Compared to its famous *Sunday At the Village Vanguard* recording, or indeed the duo with Jim Hall on *Intermodulation*, this interpretation departs from the original slow waltz and immediately hints at a double-time feel giving six beats to each of Gershwin's 33 bars.

Johnny Mandel's "Emily" is another mid-1960s film theme that Evans soon picked up on, and his opening chorus in C before the improvisations in G is a textbook example of Bill's almost throwaway harmonic subtlety. "Spring Is Here" also gains a double-time feel, compared to his earlier version on *Portrait in Jazz*, which had provided Miles a turn to be inspired and to request the pianist's arrangement be orchestrated by Gil Evans for Davis's 1961 Carnegie Hall concert.

It was a new idea on Bill's part to devote a whole number to featuring his bassist and "Embraceable You" perhaps represents an improvement on the Montreux take. A brief piano introduction sets up Gomez's out-of-tempo statement, replete with its double-stops, triple-stops and an amazing moment of almost unison between two different strings (at 0:55 from the start). Evans's greater participation helps to clarify the switch from G to C and to a faster tempo (starting at 2:13).

"For Heaven's Sake" is a c-omparative rarity in the Evans catalog. First done by Claude Thornhill, doubtless one of Bill's pianistic inspirations, and immortalized by Billie Holiday, it was recorded on *Trio '64* and only reappeared at Ronnie's and in a version from *The Secret Sessions*, done shortly after DeJohnette had been replaced by Marty Morell. Another rarity is hearing Bill outline the opening 16 bars unaccompanied, but in tempo.

A definite highlight here is the version of "Someday My Prince Will Come" which, as was Bill's Montreux performance, is ten choruses long. Far removed from either Dave Brubeck's 1957 recording that brought the song into the jazz repertoire, or indeed Evans's *Portrait in Jazz* treatment, this has alternating choruses in 3/4 and 4/4 and climaxes in exchanges with DeJohnette, two of them in each time signature. A great set-closer, rounded off by the voice of host Ronnie Scott.

"Quiet Now," written by pianist Denny Zeitlin, had been recorded on the overdubbed *Further Conversations* and as an unaccompanied solo at Montreux, but this time incorporates the backing of Gomez and DeJohnette between two solo piano statements in a quintessential Evans rendition. "'Round Midnight" was one of three Monk tunes from Bill's first overdubbed *Conversations with Myself* sessions but, in this exciting performance, Jack's interactive backing is matched by a stunning conversational solo from Gomez.

Evans's first recorded association with "Stella by Starlight" was the spacious 1958 Miles version, where his piano backing was crucial. A recent blog by the pianist/educator Ethan Iversen observes that, in that recording, "Almost certainly Bill made the final choices about what the harmony was going to be, a set of substitutions that [today] are 'the way we play the song'." His changes are used here, of course, but the energy is very different from Miles's version, as Gomez takes the first improvised chorus followed by two from Bill leading straight back to the tune.

One of at least five movie-related tunes here, "Alfie" was the theme song commissioned for the 1966 Michael Caine vehicle (as opposed to its incidental music created by Sonny Rollins). With sensitive voicing behind the melodic line and with a subtle double-time feel initially injected by Gomez, Evans almost makes one forget the original vocal. While "You're Gonna Hear from Me" is fractionally slower than the version heard earlier, it also has three choruses rather than two-and-a-half and a more outgoing accompaniment from DeJohnette.

The next Evans original was indeed written "Very Early" in his compositional career, but only recorded at the first studio sessions after the death of Scott LaFaro, for the album, *Moonbeams*. Here it's quite a bit faster, though still lyrical, until its opening-up in the solos by Bill and the amazing Gomez. "Emily" is, of course, another "repeat," but with a one-chorus Gomez solo that manages to be both speech-like and highly melodic.

The last three items in our program delve further into the history of Evans and his repertoire. The famous "Waltz for Debby," dedicated to his niece, was first heard in

Photo by Ray Roberts/BIPs/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

an unaccompanied single-chorus version on his first album *New Jazz Conceptions*.

It was substantially updated as the title-track of the second Village Vanguard album, where Scott LaFaro duplicated the bass-line of the waltz section and then drove the remainder of the performance in a swinging 4/4. That arrangement is preserved on this occasion, where the 4/4 slightly speeds up—but who's complaining?

"Autumn Leaves" again invites reminiscences of LaFaro, this arrangement being first heard on *Portrait in Jazz*. There it was notable for the piano-and-bass dialogs, as well as the pianist's brilliant soloing. But, on this conspicuously faster approach, Gomez takes the floor during five largely unaccompanied choruses before Evans comes back for a single chorus to take it out.

Finally, "Nardis," also done with LaFaro on the album *Explorations*, was first recorded by Bill under the leadership of Cannonball Adderley, during their joint membership of the Miles Davis sextet. Here it features another bass solo, while the succeeding piano dialog with the drums develops into a solo by DeJohnette. In later years, the number would become the principal spotlight for the trio's drummers, but on this occasion the drum solo is relatively short. Perhaps it had already been a longer-than-usual set.

It appears to me, from the slight variations I detect in recording characteristic, that these 20 tracks may not have been performed consecutively, as presented here. But each of the two intelligently programmed discs is roughly the length of one of the trio's sets during their Ronnie Scott's residency. Their compelling, indeed at times overwhelming, musical quality is such as to impress this listener all over again. And anyone old enough to have read my 1968 review can now hear for themselves what I was talking about.

Special thanks to ace researcher Tony Middleton for his assistance in assembling the contemporary coverage, and to Peter Larsen's discography of Bill Evans.

Brian Priestley is a prolific author and broadcaster, reviews regularly for Jazzwise *magazine and, in another life, played piano at Ronnie Scott's for one week in October 1968.*

"THE PIANO IS JUST 88 DRUMS": JACK DeJOHNETTE IN CONVERSATION WITH CHICK COREA

Chick Corea: Jack, how long did you work with Eddie and Bill as a trio?
Jack DeJohnette: About six months.

CC: Did you do a lot of gigs?

JDJ: We did quite a bit. We did Montreux the same year we played Ronnie's; we played Ronnie's after the Montreux gig. We played at Ronnie's like for a month; the trio played every night of that. I was recording it with what was, at the time, a hip recorder. I stuck the mic in the piano near Eddie's bass and it recorded the piano, bass and the drums leaked in, and Bill was really stretching. But playing there a month is why it was so good. You had a chance for the group to develop and get used to the sound in the room, feel comfortable to experiment and take chances.

CC: I'm glad you captured it. The recording quality is what it is, but the document is so important and so beautiful that it was worth it. You know, we never talked about your time with Bill. What was it like? Bill was a big hero for me and for all of our generation. We all looked up to him; his recordings with Scotty and Paul Motian. What was it like, man?

JDJ: Well, first, let me just talk about the influence Bill had and those early records he did like *Conception* with Teddy Kotick and Paul, *Everybody Digs Bill Evans* and the Vanguard tapes. Those recordings changed the way the rhythm section played, especially with the broken time when Paul was actually breaking it up. But still there was a cohesive thread of the time there. And Scotty . . . it was the dialogue, all three of them were dialoguing. But the thread was always really connected to it. And I think that's when Bill started to get into using a single-line-note solo in the right hand and a chord going with it, like block chords almost. And he started developing that then. So, playing with Bill? He didn't say much. But when he did speak, he was a quiet guy. Sometimes he was funny. But he'd take his list to go up on the bandstand and we'd just play. Eddie and I knew what to do and basically, Bill orchestrated his pieces by voicing everything the same way. It was like a score, like a piece of music.

CC: Yeah, I noticed that, that for instance, when Bill played "Waltz for Debby"

or "Emily" or almost any of his tunes, he had a set intro and sometimes a set ending. Beautiful, beautiful orchestration. I mean you could write it out for a string quartet.

JDJ: Yeah. I think he really felt safe and secure doing that. Eddie's and my role was to color that and as a rhythm section, make it sound different each time. And of course, playing with Bill was a great platform for Eddie as a soloist. He really developed a virtuoso technique and a way of soloing and playing through chords, playing through the harmonies and rhythm. But Eddie . . .

CC: Edgardo Gómez. As a bass player, he's a complete freak. He plays the bass like a flute in terms of his ability to play melodic lines and also as melodic soloist; his ability to create melodies. His bass playing, it's poetic. It's incredible. No one does that. But he also knows how to get down at the bottom and play roots. With Bill, when he developed his way of duetting with the piano player, I think that's what he likes to continue to do the most. But as a soloist, he's unique. No one like him.

JDJ: I second that. Eddie has this unique way, besides having a great sound, Eddie dialogues and holds down the bottom at the same time. He knows how to integrate both things without losing the fullness of the music. Rhythmically, also, reaching out to play a certain thing, played differently every time he played.

CC: Well you both certainly accomplished the goal of keeping things fresh, nice and colorful and textured and so forth.

JDJ: Even though Bill played those arrangements the same way, he always managed to bring his heart; to get the feeling through on those pieces. Every time you hear Bill play those pieces, there's a warmth to it and it's a great feeling that he exudes when he plays them.

CC: Throughout my life, Bill has been, not only as a piano player but as a composer and orchestrator; just a huge influence. He created a body of music . . . unbelievable! Just from the piano. He never had bigger groups, but with that trio palette, he created an incredible universe of music.

JDJ: One of my favorites is *Everybody Digs Bill Evans* with Philly Joe and Sam Jones. They really captured something in him. Philly Joe and Sam made Bill swing his butt off.

CC: When Bill was in Miles's band, he integrated really, really well with Paul [Chambers] and then with Philly Joe and then with Jimmy Cobb. And you're right, he was able to swing with those guys. But that wasn't his tendency when he had his own trios.

JDJ: No. They really pushed . . . You could feel that Bill was comfortable but he was pushed. And that was before he started using those block chords with the right-hand solo. He was just playing very much with the single-line notes and occasionally there were chords comping a little bit. There was this spatial thing happening on that record where everything was in the right place at that time. Joe was sharp as ever and the fours and interplay between Sam and the three of them . . . it was just amazing. Still one of my favorite records. The other one I like is the . . . [Jack plays piano: intro to "Flamenco Sketches" from Miles Davis/*Kind of Blue*.] That intro, I think it came after "Peace Piece" because it became modal. And it moved around different keys. But the original "Peace Piece" where Bill plays dissonant melodies against the C chord —

CC:—Yeah. Well you know when he decided to, he could improvise freely outside of any song really as well as anyone I've ever heard. I remember listening to his live shows. He used to take liberties with "Nardis." That's when he used to play freely. I used to love to hear him play that stuff.

JDJ: We played that quite a bit. Bill had a tendency to rush; he did anticipations. So the tune would always start at a moderate pace and then be jumping at the end. But the ideas and creativity . . . really excellent. There's a great video of him doing Nardis in Europe from when Philly Joe rejoined the trio.

CC: They had a great rapport, Philly Joe and Bill. In the mid-'60s, I was trying to make a living in the city. I got frustrated with trying to get piano gigs because every time I' get a piano gig, the piano in the club was so bad I'd be embarrassed to play it. So I decided I'm going to play drums. I spent about six months transcribing Philly Joe's solos and I learned a lot about sticking and rudiments and all kind of different stuff by copying Philly Joe Jones. He was my man back then. And I started getting some gigs. Stan Getz saved me by calling me for the gig in 1966, or '67 and finally I got to play on Steinways and make enough money to pay the rent. That was my short-lived drum career in New York.

Jack DeJohnette/©Chuck Stewart Photography LLC

JDJ: I always liked your drumming, man. You got a little something from everybody. You got Roy in there, you got Philly in there.

CC: You were always encouraging to my drumming. I remember when both of us played drums behind Miles until he didn't like it anymore.

JDJ: Yeah, yeah. That was fun.

CC: I like the way you bring your compassionate rhythm into Bill's trio with Eddie in this record. You're flexible enough to keep it swinging, but also to accommodate everything rhythmically that's going on. The music is gorgeous, man.

JDJ: The music was really at a creative height. You really get a chance to hear Bill stretch. On "Some Day My Prince Will Come," it goes from 3/4 to 4/4—alternates—and he really stretched a lot. And during that time, Bill used to slump over the piano, way down. But during that month, he started sitting up while playing. He stopped leaning into the piano. He was really reaching for some things.

CC: Bill was very much a quiet guy and a gentle man and a beautiful man.

JDJ: Yeah, he was. You could feel in his music, especially his ballads. I loved the way he did, "Spring is Here," and one of my favorites though is his version of "Quiet Now."

CC: I've got to learn that one. I don't know it, but I'm going to listen to it on the Ronnie Scott's record you just did.

JDJ: Yeah, it's nice 'cause you can see it modulates changes, keys.

[Jack plays]

CC: Yeah, beautiful. You get a nice sound out of your piano there man.

JDJ: Yeah, I just had it tuned.

CC: Nice, very nice man.

JDJ: Are you still playing the Bösendorfers?

CC: Yeah, this is the old Bösendorfer here. *[Chick plays "Waltz for Debby"]*

JDJ: Just amazing Chick. You're just continuously amazing.

CC: Bill Evans, man. And Jack DeJohnette and Eddie Gomez, man. That's history.

JDJ: Well yeah, and you and I with Miles, that's history too.

CC: That's right. Never to be forgotten, man. The last quintet. I remember the

solo you played. We were at the Plugged Nickel and you played a solo I'll never forget. I tell people about it. Everyone stopped. You know how that happens sometimes. It's not planned. Everyone stopped and then you were the only one left. So you were playing some drums and then Miles just let you go, and you took over the stage. And I swear, it must have been at least five, maybe eight, 10 minutes long where you played a solo on the cymbals and you never touched the drum. You played your cymbals for 10 minutes. Totally interesting. Totally kind of like, "What? He's definitely going to touch the drum any minute now." You never touched the drum. That's the kind of wild guy you are man.

JDJ: I just tried something different. I just tried to have fun with it.

CC: That's right.

JDJ: But yeah man, your playing, your touch has gotten warm even though you have the percussive aspect to it, with the harmonic and rhythmic and melodic approach is still fresh as ever. You know what's interesting? You and Herbie, you guys worked really well together. Even though you're playing the piano, you both play drums all time. You play more drummistically, or more rhythmically in terms of placement, pianistically, harmony and orchestration and instruments, all these things, because you were drummers. It's interesting 'cause Keith also plays drums too. So the rhythmically, we all have that in common.

CC: Right. The drums and the bass are sort of everything for me. The piano is just 88 drums that's all . . . 88 tuned drums. That's all the piano is.

JDJ: That's a good way to look at it. So thank you for talking to us today. You just love what you do and it comes across and I love you for that.

CC: Well, I love you too, man. And I love that we have this long enduring friendship that goes way back to really important moments in our lives and I'm glad we're still connected in making music. Lovely to see Lydia, good luck with everything. Let me know about anything. Let's stay in touch.

JDJ: Okay, yeah. Send Gayle our love too.

CC: Yeah, I will. I will, man.

JDJ: Okay man, great.

Chick Corea and Jack DeJohnette spoke on April 16, 2020.

"A SPECIAL FOUR WEEKS": EDDIE GOMEZ REFLECTS ON BILL EVANS AT RONNIE SCOTT'S

Zev Feldman: When the word went out that Resonance would be releasing this recording of the Bill Evans Trio with you and Jack DeJohnette at Ronnie Scott's in 1968, it generated considerable excitement in the jazz world. What did you think when you heard we would be putting it out?

Eddie Gomez: I was glad. After a really good concert in Montreux and some other performances in Europe, we finally did four straight weeks at Ronnie Scott's. It was a special four weeks. We really got into it. Everyone was in good form. I've always liked live recordings and it's highly unusual to get four weeks anywhere. And then to have access to the tapes is amazing. I was glad to hear it was going to be released.

ZF: What was it like to play that long at Ronnie Scott's?

EG: Playing anywhere for that long is great. Ronnie Scott's is special. The setup there is really comfortable. The stage has ample room. The audiences were great. The other group playing opposite us was very good. Dave Holland was in a trio behind a wonderful singer, Elaine Delmar. And we could stretch out because we had four weeks. The atmosphere, the environment was really suitable to relaxing. There was food, good kitchen. Very nice vibe; the ambiance was great. So everything was really comfortable. And London is one of the great cities. It was kind of a perfect situation, a unique setting to make some really good music with Bill and Jack.

ZF: Talk about Jack DeJohnette joining the trio.

EG: Jack was a good fit for the trio in the few months he was with us. Prior to Jack, Bill's trio had Philly Joe Jones, the great iconic drummer, and that was certainly spectacular. At that time, I was pretty young and so having Philly Joe on one side and Bill on the other was a huge moment in my musical life. Philly Joe was wonderful. He was terrific to be around and he was very supportive. But having Jack in the trio was great. He had added a particular fresh kind of energy. It was good for Bill; Bill reacted very positively to Jack. Jack is a drummer, but he's also a pianist; he's really a pianist who plays drums. That's arguably why he fit in so well. Jack brought a lot of good points to the trio: the energy, he was very open about how to address the pulse, how to play time with us. That was nice, it was refreshing, I liked it. Obviously, Bill did too. You can

tell from the recordings that Bill was definitely into how the trio was sounding. Jack really was a positive force.

ZF: What do you remember from that month?

EG: I remember Miles coming in once or twice. I think that's where he heard Dave Holland playing with Elaine Delmar's trio and later, he called Dave. Ronnie Scott himself was a comedian. His setups; he had a bunch of jokes. He was like a standup comic, aside from being a really excellent saxophonist. He would do a short introduction, a great intro. He set the audience up. They'd relax, they'd laugh a little bit, they'd be drinking, maybe eating dinner. It had a very entertaining vibe to it.

I had fun there. We all stayed at the same hotel, the White House in Marylebone. My room had a kitchen. It was like having a little apartment and people would come up. One guy I remember was the comic, Spike Milligan. There was a group of comics, they were sort of Ronnie's boys, sort of like the English version of the Rat Pack. The hotel was close to the club. I would take my bass over there in one of those big English cabs that are really kind of special. It was quite a scene. It was a lot of fun to be playing and also, off stage it was fun just to kind of be in it, to be immersed in that whole scene.

ZF: How did Bill feel?

EG: He really was very comfortable and at home in London. All his needs were met there. The piano was good. It was easy for him to get over to the club. They had a nice dressing room. There was no downside to the club that I can remember. It was a good fit for Bill and you can hear it in the music. He sounds like he's into it and he's reacting to what the trio's doing, what Jack's doing.

ZF: You played many of the tunes you played at Ronnie Scott's at Montreux: "A Sleepin' Bee," "Quiet Now," "Nardis," "Embraceable You" and "Someday My Prince Will Come." What differences do you hear between the two versions?

EG: The fact that we're in a club makes it way more relaxed than when you're in this setting of being a one-set, one-hour, highly spotlighted concert in this big festival. We were at Montreux several days before the concert and we just played for one hour. It's quite strikingly different than being four weeks at Ronnie Scott's. It's a whole different ballgame in terms of ease and comfort in making the music happen. So it was the perfect setting to be at the club.

Eddie Gomez / © Francois Jacquenod for GM Press

It was good to have the concert prior to it, but in a way, it should have been the other way around. Usually you'd want to do a few weeks of club and then do a concert. In this case, it was the other way around. Anyway, the repertoire was pretty much the same. The performances at Ronnie Scott's are more relaxed; we'd had some time playing this repertoire and particularly under a very high-pressure situation at the Montreux Festival. So when we got to the club, it was like, "Take a deep breath and go out and play."

ZF: How was it listening to these recordings now as compared to your memories from 50 years before?

EG: It's always a surprise. It's enlightening to go back and relive moments that are ingrained in your memory in a totally different way; time just does that. 50, 52 years; that's a half a century. That's a long time. So going back and listening to it and reflecting on it and seeing the changes in all three of us from this perspective gives you a different view. Bill went on to perform for another 12 years or so. And Jack, of course, is still around and still doing what I do. There are surprises. I've always been critical, but going that far back, I just let go and enjoyed the totality of it; enjoyed what we were able to accomplish. I didn't regret what didn't happen. I enjoyed the good stuff. And there's quite a bit of good stuff. So that's my sense of it. I have good feelings about it.

ZF: Bill was a sort of father figure to you.

EG: I looked up to him. He was very nurturing and I think he was very open to my input. He never said anything that made me feel uncomfortable. He was always supportive. He was like a father figure in the sense that he was a musical teacher, a mentor, and I looked at it that way. I still do. He was also very good to be with. He didn't pontificate or didn't have an attitude of like, "Do it this way or not at all." He was democratic when it came to the music. He believed that's the way the music worked best. So it was easy to look up to him, work along with him, follow his lead and also, of course, put my two cents in. He made it easy that way.

ZF: How about Jack?

EG: We go back a long time. I've always enjoyed being around him. He's very musical. He's a jovial guy, he's nice to hang around. He's very friendly and that translates onto the bandstand. We had a lot to share in terms of common musical taste. And I think he met his wife, Lydia, that month. So this was an important moment—these four weeks at Ronnie's—for Jack aside from the music. And I was there to see that and share that. And there was just a lot of music and a lot of good, positive energy and emotion during those four weeks. We had a good time together and we still do. There's a lot of respect and a lot of history.

Zev Feldman: Do you have any final thoughts about these performances at Ronnie Scott's?

EG: I'm glad you unearthed them. I hope for Bill's audience that it brings them closer to Bill's music and gives them a little more insight into what Bill was living in 1968 in that month that the records are from.

Eddie Gomez was interviewed by Zev Feldman on July 24, 2020.

DAVID STONE MARTIN: INSPIRATION AND REVELATION

by Zev Feldman

David Stone Martin (1913 – 1992) was one of the greatest album cover designers and commercial artists, frequently cited as a key contributor to the public's recognition of jazz music as an important manifestation of American culture. It's a dream come true for me to have a one of a kind illustration by DSM depicting Bill Evans to grace the cover of this album. Although DSM didn't play an instrument, he contextualized and helped define a whole new way of presenting album cover art, endowing his covers with a power and invention intended to forge listeners with the music featured within.

I'm an enormous fan of DSM's work and have been collecting albums with his artwork for decades now. Whether it's jazz albums, posters, or magazine covers, the work of DSM remains relevant and exciting to me, as it has to his many admirers here in the U.S. and internationally as well. DSM's son Tony, a painter and media artist in his own right, had this to say about the cover for this album:

> *"For this image, my father chose what is perhaps the quintessential one that many doubtless recall of Bill Evans, bowed over in reverence, deep in the tides of his music and his own intense dialogue with the piano. Not only has David portrayed this musician's distinct intimacy with his instrument, but perhaps also a sense of separateness in Bill Evans that was not loneliness but rather someone set apart. David always immersed himself in the music before putting pen to paper: his work came directly out of his own emotional response to the music."*

My good friend and colleague Cynthia Sesso of CTSIMAGES first told me about this drawing in 2012 when I was in the process of licensing a Fred Seligo image for Resonance's *Live at Art D'Lugoff's Top of the Gate* release by Bill Evans. She wrote me,

> *". . . . have a one of a kind original lithograph drawing by the esteemed artist DSM of Bill Evans seated at a piano composing. I personally*

David Stone Martin/William P. Gottlieb/Ira and Leonore S. Gershwin Fund Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress.

commissioned this piece from DSM in 1985 when I first started collecting his record jacket art. The piece is signed & inscribed as well. It's quite a treasure!!"

She wasn't kidding! I believe there's only one other instance of DSM ever creating a full figure drawing of Bill Evans. Rendered in DSM's signature ink and wash, it keeps company with other preceding covers rendered in the same style. As soon as I knew we would be releasing this Ronnie Scott project, I realized it would be a tremendous opportunity to showcase this delightful illustration.

I had one big decision to make, though: do we go all the way and recreate a jacket in the same manner of DSM's classic covers of the 1940s and 1950s even though our album isn't from that era? Or do we go a different, more modern route and simply incorporate DSM's artwork into a more contemporary style image? I thought long and hard about this. Ultimately, I came to see it as an opportunity to recreate that special era, a nod to those classic 1940s and '50s Verve/Clef/Norgran album covers.

This exercise made me dig out many of my original DSM covers, and you'll notice that the Resonance logo is in text form (not the usual oval design) and appears vertically on the right side instead of at the bottom so as not to interfere with the placement of DSM's signature. No detail was too small to consider and examine as we went about this process.

Our incredible designer John Sellards was more than up to the task of recreating the style, look, and feel of that era, even adding a watercolor swash on the back from artist Holly Bess Kincaid to put front and back covers in sync. I'm thankful to have had Cynthia's support and blessing, and I'm grateful to DSM's son Tony and his wife Margot Farrington, who gave us specific and valuable direction so we wouldn't encroach on the artwork with our design. I would have regretted not fully following through with our homage to DSM's style and typography.

I'd like to thank Resonance's founder, George Klabin, the executive producer of this album, who generously committed to providing the necessary resources to enable us to secure the drawing for this album cover. I'm a firm believer that album cover artwork is one of the most essential aspects of creating a memorable album release. That's certainly true here. This album brings new discoveries for DSM fans and Bill Evans fans alike.

"EIGHT HOURS A DAY, CHEV": CHEVY CHASE ON BILL EVANS AND JAZZ

Zev Feldman: How did you get into jazz?

Chevy Chase: My father loved jazz. Duke Ellington was his man. When Frank Sinatra died, I remember the world was touched by it. I said, "Dad, what were your feelings about Frank Sinatra when he died? Did it affect you?" He said, "No." I said, "What did?" He said, "Ella Fitzgerald." So you can see where the idea of jazz affected his life and, of course, for him, Duke Ellington was the most brilliant. And when somebody in the band would stand up and play a solo—tenor sax or alto, those 64 bars or so, that's when I got excited. That's when dad and my brother Ned got excited. So that was beginning of liking jazz for me.

ZF: Did your brother play too?

CC: No, but he had a great ear. He still does. He was the one who found the people I listened to. He was a little older, but I can remember us like at 13 years old in his bedroom listening to Bill on "Peace Piece," that album [*Everybody Digs Bill Evans*]. Wonderful.

ZF: Do you remember the first time you saw Bill Evans play?

CC: I went down to one place; it might've been the Vanguard. We would get in there at 15 and 16. You weren't supposed to, but what did Max know? And I heard Bill with Chuck Israels and Larry Bunker. Great, great musicians. And that was the first time I saw him.

ZF: What was it that made you gravitate toward Bill's music?

CC: I come from a very musical family, so I'm used to hearing closed chords and things that others don't; things that bother others' ears. For me, something that's all in sixths or fourths or whatever doesn't bother me at all, I love it. And up to then, most everything was blues. Basically, blues are what everything's based on anyway. Bill's playing blues too. Bill was able to take whatever he learned forever. Anyway, I don't know that we ever heard the kinds of chords that he played before we heard him. That he was able to move so quickly on the piano from one set of chords to another set while he improvised was remarkable, and it was just pretty, beautiful. It was the most lyrical jazz you could ever hear in terms of jazz

that wasn't sung. It was just beautiful. And yet, very complex. And for years, even right up to now, jazz pianists would gravitate towards Bill, would try to be that. Everybody I know tried to be Bill, but all you have to do is put a little video of Bill on or a record and say, "Try that." I don't know, how could he move so fast from a five-finger chord all the way to there and still make it so pretty. He really had a touch on the piano that you couldn't match. I've tried to play like "One for Helen," where he's playing and then he goes up a whole octave. Well, you try doing that yourself and it just sounds awful. I wish I could play up there, because it's so personal, somehow. And he just, somehow, had such a beautiful touch that it made sense.

ZF: How did you get to know Bill?

CC: Well, I was in college with a lovely girl named Blythe Danner. A lot of people know her as an actress. But we were going together, and she also was very musical and sang jazz songs, all the songs that he'd recorded. She was very good, and we had a little group. So we were the only people at my college who did that, and we were fairly well known for that. We would go to New York on occasion, on a weekend we'd say, "Let's go," particularly if Bill was there.

By then, Bill knew me as a great fan, and he began to notice Blythe, who was very pretty and jazzy, and I think he had a crush on her somewhat. So things were always good when we went to watch him, we'd maybe get a better seat or whatever. And we got to know him and he got to know us.

We'd go to the Vanguard and see Bill, or the Gate and after a while, Blythe and I weren't together, but I still couldn't help myself, and I had other friends from college who just adored him. Anybody who knew anything about jazz, in college and afterward, they knew Bill Evans, and it would always be a dream to go see him live.

What amazed me was his unbelievable ability to play in that final position where he looks actually dead, he's actually completely asleep. And how can you nod out that way and still play perfectly without even looking at your hands? Incredible solos, incredible beauty.

That's how I got to know him. We were on speaking terms, and I started driving him back home after us being at the Vanguard or whatever. I would drive him home to Riverdale and that was good enough to eventually become friends with this incredible man and be in his apartment with him. At that point, I was already thinking about playing a piano, or learning it, I said, "I can't believe what you're doing there." He had his piano in the living room, so I asked him, "How do you do that?" He said, his lesson to me was, "Eight hours a day, Chev." It was that voice that he had. "Eight hours a day, Chev."

And he meant it. This guy was on the piano all the time and he meant it. So he wasn't going to get tired of it and nobody else was going to get tired of hearing him. Brilliant stuff. And I got two cats out of him. His cats had a litter, they were Siamesers, that's what we liked to say. But these cats, he had too many of them, like five or something, I don't know, and he gave me two. And by God, I had them. I named them John and Mary, because one of my best friends was Dustin Hoffman. He had just came out with a movie called *John and Mary* that was quite a hit back then. And so I thought, "Oh, I can put all my friends together in one little cat." Anyway, John and Mary, they lived a long, long time.

ZF: So at the time, he's living in Riverdale. Where were you living at the time?

CC: 52nd and Lex, over a tavern. The cockroaches would open the door for me. It was a one room apartment and I don't remember what I was making a living doing, maybe driving a cab or a truck or waiter, all the things that young guys do. And then I was a film editor for quite a while, sound editor to film. Just things, jobs, but of course, it gave me time to play Frisbee in the park as much as I could with my friends and also go to the Village and hear Bill. Then I lived in the Village on Bleecker and Thompson across from the Gate. I lived there for a few years.

ZF: Did you go there often, living so close?

CC: Well, Bill wasn't always there, but there was jazz. You could practically walk up and down and back up Seventh Avenue and up Sixth and hear jazz just coming out of places. It was like magic. But if you didn't hear it, you were hearing it in your own ears even if it wasn't really happening. But yeah, I mean, people who went to the West Village thought they were kind of cool, because they were. Because that kind of music was just beautiful to hear. Roland Kirk. Roland knew me by my footsteps when I'd go in to hear him. That's the kind of ears these guys had, and it was also very flattering that I could go in early for one of his shows and he'd say, "Hi, Chevy." He'd just hear my footsteps. What the heck? So many great, wonderful

Jack DeJohnette / © Francois Jacquenod for GM Press

Eddie Gomez/©Chuck Stewart Photography LLC

people at that time, and many of them really looked up to Bill, because obviously how can you not.

ZF: Did Bill respond to you differently when you became famous? Did anything change in your relationship?

CC: I didn't see much of him when I was doing "SNL" that first year. I was too involved with the show and myself. There are many little things, but he didn't change when I became well-known. That's more important, I think, and a lesson to me. Because suddenly I was the biggest star in the country, just Bam! From "SNL." And I just sort of had to ignore it myself. But with Bill, it was, yeah, everything's fine. No big deal. I loved that about him, that he was never bothered or pushed by somebody else's success. He could have a president sit next to him by the piano and he'd just play. He was great.

So not much changed. I could call him, I could talk to him on the phone or whatever. I would call him and say, "Bill," and he'd go, "Hi, Chevy." And I'd say, "Hey, listen to this, man." And I'd play a couple little things that sound a little like him. "Yeah, that's pretty good." This is pretty good. I thought I was the best pianist in the world, but all I got were a couple of chords there and, "Yeah, that's pretty good." But he was very sweet. Funny, too. 'Cause when he said, "That's pretty good," he was being funny.

ZF: Were any of your friends into jazz like you were, or were you pretty much the lone jazzhead of the bunch?

CC: My friends were, too. In fact, I had a funny little group called the Very Bad Jazz Band, and it was me and Donald Fagen and the guys who were in Steely Dan later. Donald loved good jazz. I think he loved Bill. It wasn't bad, our little group.

ZF: You got to see a number of legends: Thelonious Monk, John Coltrane and Charles Mingus. Where would you see Monk, and what was that like?

CC: The Vanguard. I got to see him in my late teens. I'd be with them in the kitchen. It was always funny how Thelonious would be in the kitchen, just talking or something, maybe with Bill even. And if you just went into the club, you'd find Charlie Rouse, a trio of guys on the bandstand sweating and giving everything they could to a good 25, 30 minutes of music waiting for Thelonious to come out and sit at the piano. You didn't just go to see Thelonious Monk, you'd go to *not* see him. He just did whatever he felt like. He was kind of pleasant to me. He'd do funny accents and all kinds of crap that went on between musicians.

But he was so brilliant. I thought of him as the comedy of jazz, Thelonious. Because by then, I was so inured to him, listening to him, and he was nothing like Bill. I mean, they were just completely different, but they actually liked each other. I don't think they went out together, but they respected each other.

ZF: You know what I find interesting? When you listen to Monk from the early '50s, late '40s, you hear different influences. Like I hear Teddy Wilson.

CC: Oh, Teddy Wilson, well . . . I mean, everybody was affected by him, it's like Red Garland or something, you couldn't get away from him. Yeah, I think you're right about that. Putting it in my head, Thelonious and Teddy Wilson.

ZF: Let's talk about John Coltrane. Where would you see him play?

CC: The Five Spot.

ZF: How would you describe John Coltrane?

CC: Well, again, my brother Ned took me down to the Village to see John Coltrane, in a sort of a restaurant setting. You walk in, there's a bar along the side and you look over there are tables with people, and then there's a little stage. That's when I first saw him. And Ned was saying, "You gotta hear this guy's energy." And he was right. Every time you hear a note of Coltrane's solo, keep in mind that he's just taken that one note and given everything he had to it, all the strength in himself to it. And that's what, for me, differentiated him from any other sax player at the time. It was a dangerous thing to try to be like Coltrane; you might blow your brains out. You might go the way of many. He just had so much emotion and anger and fear and all the things that we feel, but feel at a very high level, and he would just put it into his music. It was something. And when I heard him that the first time, I realized there will never be anybody like that again.

ZF: Did you ever talk to him?

CC: Sure. He just recognized me for being another fan who would come in and see him five days in a row or something. But it was like Miles letting me play with him at the à Go-Go. He said to Tony Williams, "Hey Tony, let Chevy sit in," as a kind of a joke. He knew I played the drums. And I think we played "Killer Joe." And I played

the drums. I was so frightened. And he said, "Let's not trade fours or anything," as I was going to the drums and Tony Williams was sort of giggling. It was just a nice thing; it wasn't like we had a big crowd. It was at the Café à Go-Go across from where I lived on Bleecker.

ZF: How about Mingus? Did you ever speak with Mingus, did you ever talk with him?

CC: No. People were afraid to talk to Mingus, they were afraid . . . These were gods. Charles Mingus, well hell, that's not a bass player, that's a god. He was just an amazing guy, and he had no trouble speaking during his sets. He wouldn't introduce the songs like, I don't know, like George Shearing, but he would talk. You never quite knew what he was doing, like Mingus with that voice. These guys had the best voices in the world. And their voices were a feature of their music. I mean, it was an amazing thing. People say, "Well did you ever talk to so and so?" No, but I heard him talk. Well, that's just as good. "You heard them?" Yeah. Live, right there. And I did, I heard all these guys.

ZF: Do you see any parallels between jazz and comedy?

CC: Both of them require an ability and a desire to improvise around a certain theme, particularly physical comedy. An example would be, you take a situation, guy in a raincoat, a woman's house in the morning. The only thing you know is he's in a raincoat and he goes to the door and knocks. What happens? Well, there are a billion things that could happen. He could be a flasher, one of those guys. Or he could be her husband, he could be . . . I mean, just, it's all open to you, given the theme—the apartment and a guy in a raincoat. It's that kind of thing.

Now, for jazz, you'll have songs, great songs, written by Cole Porter, by Gershwin or whomever, and that's your theme, that's the place you go; your raincoat. And how many hundreds of jazz musicians have played on that particular song? "When I Fall in Love," take that. Everybody has played it, but everybody plays it differently. And it's a very simple tune, but everybody's version will be different.

ZF: Describe the difference for you between being a musician and being a comedian?

CC: They're both getting attention one way or the other, I'm sure that's what the child in us wants anyway. But when you get older and the child is still in you, you better get better on the piano. But the comedians I like and loved are people who would just surprise you.

I'll tell you a little story. I was writing for the Smothers Brothers on NBC, ratings weren't going that well. They called the writers in and we had a meeting, and Dick and Tom said, "What's going on, what can we change?" And I, who was sort of at the back of the room, small room, had a glass of water in my hand. I said, "Well," [jerks his hand holding the glass] like that, and the water just flew. Well, everybody laughed and Tom and Dick laughed and I said, "That's the problem, you've got to surprise them. And if you're just standing there doing the jokes one after another, some they've heard, some not, it's not a surprise. It's not the kind of surprise that makes you laugh." So they started putting me on their show in the background somewhere doing something. But I was right, really. Everything I've done in comedy, the exception of film, is about not giving you what you expect. It's about surprising you. That's what laughter is.

ZF: And music?

CC: Same thing.

Chevy Chase was interviewed by Zev Feldman on September 6, 2017

Bill Evans/©Chuck Stewart Photography LLC

Bill Evans

Live At Ronnie Scott's

Produced for release
by Zev Feldman and Jack DeJohnette
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Dedicated to the memory of Bill Evans

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