

At Ease with Coleman Hawkins



DESIGN / PHOTO: DON SCHLITEN



AT EASE WITH COLEMAN HAWKINS

COLEMAN HAWKINS tenor saxophone

TOMMY FLANAGAN piano WENDELL MARSHALL bass OSIE JOHNSON drums

1 FOR YOU, FOR ME, FOR EVERMORE 6:07
2 WHILE WE'RE YOUNG 3:33
3 THEN I'LL BE TIRED OF YOU 5:08
4 MIGHTY LIKE A ROSE 4:00

5 AT DAWNING 4:39
6 TROUBLE IS A MAN 5:25
7 POOR BUTTERFLY 6:06
8 I'LL GET BY (AS LONG AS I HAVE YOU) 6:36

COLEMAN HAWKINS, the man who in the 1920s made the tenor saxophone a jazz instrument, who in the 1930s broke new harmonic ground with "Body and Soul," was a pioneer who looked forward, not back. When the young beboppers began their explorations in the early 1940s, he nurtured their ambition and their spirits and gave them work. Throughout his long career, his accompanists were likely to be from the newest jazz generation. After pianist Tommy Flanagan moved to New York, it did not take Hawkins long to hire him. *At Ease* is one of the most charming and attractive of the many albums the two made together—a collection of ballads played with great affection for the melody. Hawkins could be fiercely aggressive in his playing. In this collection, he displays his tenderness.

I remember the sessions well, I remember how the musicians wanted to sound, and I remember their reactions to the playbacks. Today, I feel strongly that I am their messenger. —RUDY VAN GELDER

Recorded by RUDY VAN GELDER at Van Gelder Studio, Englewood Cliffs, NJ; January 29, 1960.
Supervision by ESMOND EDWARDS Remastering, 2006—Rudy Van Gelder (Van Gelder Studio)
All transfers were made from the analog master tapes to digital at 24-bit resolution.
Notes by ZAN STEWART Total Time 41:57

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AT EASE WITH

COLEMAN HAWKINS tenor saxophone
TOMMY FLANAGAN piano WENDELL MARSHALL bass
OSIE JOHNSON drums

Some few years ago, along with the popular acceptance of the long playing high fidelity record a new vogue was created in the form of "mood music." It was found that there was a definite market for this type of listening and it was not long before there were scores of albums to be seen displayed on record counters with titles beginning "Music to. . . ." Whatever the individual wanted to do, there was an album of music to do it by. So mood music today is part of our lives, we push a button and turn a knob and we are automatically soothed by lush orchestrations of favorite ballads. Somewhere along the way it seems to us the feeling behind the fine original compositions of America's lyricists and composers has become a little obscured. We think the Prestige/ Moodsville series will be a welcome departure from "mood" music. This series will feature top jazz artists interpreting choice ballads and standards, and original compositions that will fit into the Moodsville series.

This idea is certainly not new. Standards are frequently used as foundations or vehicles by the jazz musician but in most cases the melody line is stated very briefly and then used as a basis for improvisation and exploration. In other instances, a jazz artist is subject to compromise with commercialism; as for instance when a fine single jazz artist is surrounded by a string ensemble. We at Prestige feel that there is room for honest jazz performances of ballads wherein the musical integrity of the artist is maintained and at the same time the original beauty and feeling of the ballad is not lost. Jazz is not only "that loud, frantic music." It can be loud, frantic, and uninhibited (and that is certainly no grounds for indictment), but it can also be beautiful, poetic, and thoughtful. Some of jazz's moments of purest musical truths are achieved when good jazz musicians address themselves to the playing of tunes at slow and medium tempos. It is perhaps no accident that Coleman Hawkins' most famous recording is his "Body and Soul," no accident that Miles Davis rose to the great popularity he now enjoys through his lyrical performances of ballads.

We have sought to compile and record performances done in the spirit of good, valid jazz. It is our intention to make available the enjoyable listening that is to be had when important names in jazz can just relax and play the tunes they like. These sessions then, will not be tight studio productions. The emphasis will be on relaxed, thoughtful, and expressive jazz, after-hours music, if you will. The Moodsville series will, we hope, provide you the listener with a concept in listening that you will find refreshing. You will notice that these albums are presented as volumes and that is what they are. Each one will be part of a continued series wherein the artists will select their favorites and play them under informal and relaxed conditions. Different artists will appear in each volume and we shall bring together jazz artists who do not usually have the opportunity to record together. Where possible we shall include comments by the musicians on the songs chosen and anything they might have to say about the session. Here then, is a blending of fine standard American songs and treatments by some of the leading names in jazz.

Having told you the basic idea behind the Moodsville series we shall now introduce the artist and the tunes they have selected.

Through the pages of history there has always been the one individual in a particular field of endeavor who sets the pace, the one who led and vanquished all challengers. In art there was Michelangelo, Da Vinci, and Rembrandt. In literature—Shakespeare, Dickens, Mark Twain. In sports—Babe Ruth, Joe Louis, Jessie Owens. In the world of jazz one name that would have to be included in this category is that of Coleman Hawkins. The ageless "Hawk" has responded to the sudden and dramatic changes in jazz through the years with consummate ease. The challengers have been met along a road measuring over thirty years in time up to the present day.

It is not the intention here to attempt to write a full historical background on Coleman Hawkins, for this we would refer you to the excellent notes written by Frank Driggs for the album *Coleman*

COLEMAN HAWKINS

FOR YOU, FOR ME,
FOR EVERMORE
WHILE WE'RE YOUNG
THEN I'LL BE TIRED OF YOU
MIGHTY LIKE A ROSE

AT DAWNING
TROUBLE IS A MAN
POOR BUTTERFLY
I'LL GET BY
(AS LONG AS I HAVE YOU)

Hawkins All Stars (Prestige/Swingville 2005).

During the last two years there has been a sudden reawakening on the part of record companies to the fact that the Hawkins tenor has as much to say now as it did in the Thirties, Forties, and early Fifties. Today there is plenty of recently recorded evidence on several labels that the "Bean" can match any of the modern sounds while still retaining all the gutsy strength and vigor of the Swing era. Not only Hawkins, but many of his associates of this period of jazz are being recorded again. (Prestige is proud to be taking part in this activity with its Swingville series). Many of us are beginning to realize the importance of this sort of renaissance. If we assume the average age of jazz lovers today runs between 24 and 28 (the majority) then this group can have very little knowledge of what was being played in the Thirties, other than the ardent students and collectors. Hearing people like Coleman Hawkins within the area of the modern idiom can only make us reflect on the depth of jazz. He is the source from which many tenor styles evolved and he has listened and absorbed everything that has been happening over the years.

This album presents a relaxed session of ballads. The rhythm section consists of three men who have recorded with the "Bean" in the past. Each man possesses a character of playing that does not belong to any one school of jazz.

Tommy Flanagan, originally from Detroit, came to New York in 1956. He has played with many different groups including Miles Davis and Sonny Rollins. His piano can be heard on many albums and his versatility shows up in that he has recorded on our Prestige, New Jazz, and Swingville labels. Tommy has a flowing style that rolls along. He does not pound or abuse, in fact he does none of the things that are of the "hard sell" variety. He has developed into a much sought after jazz pianist.

Wendell Marshall was born in St. Louis, MO. He was bassist with Duke Ellington for

five years. Since 1955 he has freelanced in New York and now is one of the most frequently used bassists in recording. Wendell has appeared on many Prestige LPs.

Osie Johnson is both drummer and arranger. Many of his original compositions have been recorded by jazz musicians, including Benny Green and Frank Wess. Born in Washington, DC, he has worked with Earl Hines, Tony Scott, Illinois Jacquet, and Dorothy Donegan. He appeared on the very successful *Sound of Jazz* show on CBS-TV with Coleman Hawkins and other jazz greats in December 1957. He is on two Coleman Hawkins albums on Prestige and on several of the Swingville series. His forceful driving power sparks any album on which he appears.

The tunes for this set were carefully chosen by Hawkins for this and he should have you reminiscing with each selection. No record date is ever hurried with this man and he will not be pushed. The relaxed, unhurried atmosphere of this session is well captured.

During 1959, he and Roy Eldridge had a quintet at the Metropole in New York, about the only room in New York where one could hear the uncomplicated sounds of the Swing era. So far in this year of 1960 he has made a European tour and has continued to freelance around New York. Sometimes he can be heard in little known clubs in Jersey or playing "little" concerts in New York State. He is currently appearing in a concert series at a theater on 74th Street in New York with such members of the ultra-modern school as Charlie Mingus and Allen Eager. He will play when and where the fancy arises, in whatever idiom he chooses. There are a few in jazz today who have this privilege.

—RON EYRE

These notes appeared on the original album liner.

I WAS THE ENGINEER on the recording sessions and I also made the masters for the original LP issues of these albums. Since the advent of the CD, other people have been making the masters. Mastering is the final step in the process of creating the sound of the finished product. Now, thanks to the folks at the Concord Music Group who have given me the opportunity to remaster these albums, I can present my versions of the music on CD using modern technology. I remember the sessions well, I remember how the musicians wanted to sound, and I remember their reactions to the playbacks. Today, I feel strongly that I am their messenger. —**RUDY VAN GELDER**

AT EASE REVISITED

BEYOND ANY DOUBT, jazz tenor saxophone giant Coleman Hawkins (November 21, 1904-May 19, 1969) was an extraordinary artist. He boasted as rich and vibrant a tenor saxophone tone as has ever been heard. He was an intellect who adored operas and who dug deeply into the intricacies of harmony. He was arguably the first musician who saw the future of jazz as a serious art form, not primarily as entertainment, though he knew art needed to be this, too. (This intriguing conceit is deftly developed in Scott DeVeaux's highly-recommended *The Birth of Bebop*, University of California Press.)

St. Joseph, Missouri native Hawkins, whom this writer as a youth was indeed fortunate to hear in a small Los Angeles-area club in the early 1960s, has a résumé filled with groundbreaking moments. He was widely recognized, and often called the first jazz tenor saxophonist, for his work with Fletcher Henderson's orchestra from 1924 to roughly 1934, where at points he played with Louis Armstrong, from whom he absorbed aspects of flow in improvisation. In 1939, he recorded his rendition of "Body and Soul," which mixed almost free-form exposition (he never plays more than snippets of the song's theme) with a sense of what listeners could absorb (it became a million-selling hit).

Hawkins made what is arguably the first bebop recording in January, 1944 featuring Dizzy Gillespie and Max Roach. He was the first jazzman to record unaccompanied, in 1945. He hired younger players like Miles Davis and Thelonious Monk. As one of his disciples, the renowned tenor saxophonist Lew Tabackin, says, "The difference between him and people like Charlie Parker was the rhyth-

mic concept. Harmonically, he was cutting-edge, truly an avant-garde musician, and an inspiration."

Through the years, Hawkins proved he could handle any type of material, but perhaps he was at his most moving and persuasive when playing ballads, or at relaxed tempos.

Of his ballad artistry, Barry Harris, Hawk's last pianist and himself an inspiration to countless musicians through his workshops, says, "He was the greatest. He made the greatest—'Body and Soul'. Any other ballad sounded great."

The collection at hand, *At Ease with Coleman Hawkins*, was one of ten albums "Bean" recorded for the Prestige family of labels (Moodsville and Swingville were subsidiaries) between November 7, 1958 and August 16, 1962.

Like most of those recordings, the program of this January 29, 1960 date is built around slow to leisurely-paced examinations of arcane and familiar material, played exquisitely with an A-1 rhythm section.

Here, that trio comprises pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Wendell Marshall, and drummer Osie Johnson. Flanagan—like Harris a Detroit native and a bebop-based artist with a silken touch and the ability to create gorgeous improvisations—was one of Hawkins's favorite late-career pianists. Marshall and Johnson were two stalwarts of the New York City jazz scene, and had been recording with Hawkins intermittently since the mid-1950s.

The opener, "For You, For Me, For Evermore," is a George Gershwin (1898-1937) melody with words by his brother, Ira. It was debuted posthumously by Dick Haymes and Betty Grable in the 1947 film *The Shocking Miss*

Pilgrim. Jazz versions include those by singers Chris Connor and Ella Fitzgerald.

Here, Hawkins, as he does throughout the album, creates colorful masses of sound with a subtone, where he supports each note with large columns of air, keeping a loose embouchure on the mouthpiece. The process gives the sound that whoosh of air and its core ring. With it, he offers a telling verse, then lays out a series of attractive, fluid lines at a medium swing.

In a 1956 article in *Down Beat* magazine, Hawkins told Nat Hentoff about his sound. "It's funny about having a big tone," he said. "A lot of times I can play the exact same thing as someone else, but they swear it's different, but it's only because my tone is bigger. I always did want to be heard... I wanted a strong tone. No, I don't think I could advise people how to get a big tone... I don't believe it's something you can teach. It just comes from the individual way a man blows into a horn. Does it have anything to do with personality? Well, maybe so."

"For You" also displays Flanagan's knack for playing choice notes in tidy packages, Marshall's fat-toned, firm beat, and Johnson's on-the-money time.

Alec Wilder and Morty Palitz's "While We're Young," with lyrics by Bill Engvick, was published in 1943, and premiered by the Mitchell Ayres's Orchestra in 1952, with subsequent versions by Perry Como, Johnny Hartman, and Dinah Washington. There's Hawkins's wonderfully deceptive Latin introduction, and, in his medium-paced solo, some of the bop-bent thoughts that reveal his modernism.

"Then I'll Be Tired of You," from Arthur Schwartz and Yip Harburg, was waxed in 1934 by both Fats Waller and Freddie Martin. As is his wont, "Bean" essentially sings his solo, creating a new song in so doing.

"Mighty Like a Rose," composed by Ethelbert Nevin in 1901 (and initially known as "Mighty Lak' a Rose"), is an old song that still packs a wallop. Singers Paul Robeson and Frank Sinatra, and pianists Eddie Heywood, Al Haig, and Art Tatum are among those who favored it. Hawkins makes it meaningful, powerful, beautiful. He plays it straight through, with no solo. Notice how he gives the melody personality—some notes are fattened up with

more air, some tagged, duh-duh-dah-duh in a row. Coleman's creamy, extended middle-register A-flat provides a sublime close.

Hawkins also sticks with just the theme at the front on "At Dawning," another vintage item. Charles Cadman wrote this majestic theme in 1916, with Robeson and Nelson Eddy among those covering it. Both the leader's and Flanagan's manner of simply elaborating a theme to give it singularity is worthy of study. On his last chorus, "Bean" stretches things a bit, then closes with a soft ritard.

Alec Wilder's "Trouble Is a Man" was first recorded in 1947 by Sarah Vaughan; others digging into it have been Chris Connor, Boyd Raeburn, Lorez Alexandria, and Judy Holliday. Now we have a gorgeous modern ballad with a classy theme, great chords, and flow—an almost startling contrast to the two previous selections. Again, Hawkins plays one comely idea after another, all ushered in with that mass of breath. Flanagan gets to shine, too, mixing beguiling single-note lines with quietly dancing chords. Superb.

John Golden and Raymond Hubbell's "Poor Butterfly" from 1916, is a contemporary-sounding song from time past. It has long found admirers in the jazz camp, including Nat "King" Cole, Erroll Garner, Benny Goodman, and Hawkins's disciple, Sonny Rollins. At a medium clip, the leader gives the theme a tender treatment, then opens up, finding any number of intricate, intriguing ideas to tell his story. Flanagan's two choruses exemplify his way of finding the melodic beauty in bebop.

The program concludes with Fred Ahlert's "I'll Get By," with words by Roy Turk. This evergreen from 1928 has been recorded by Art Tatum, Teddy Wilson, and Billie Holiday. Coleman swings with grace over Johnson's engaging brush patter.

At Ease with Coleman Hawkins makes a refreshing addition to anyone's music library. Its eight stellar renditions are designed to be played time and again.

—**ZAN STEWART**

June 2006

MV 7



At Ease with Coleman Hawkins



1 FOR YOU, FOR ME, FOR EVERMORE

(Gershwin-Gershwin) WB Music-ASCAP 6:07

2 WHILE WE'RE YOUNG

(Wildier-Engwick-Palitz) Ludlow Music-BMI 3:33

3 THEN I'LL BE TIRED OF YOU

(Schwartz-Harburg) Arthur Schwartz Music/Next Decade
Entertainment-ASCAP 5:08

4 MIGHTY LIKE A ROSE

(Eitelbert Nevin) P.D. 4:00

5 AT DAWNING

(Charles W. Cadman) P.D. 4:39

6 TROUBLE IS A MAN

(Alec Wilder) Ludlow-BMI 5:25

7 POOR BUTTERFLY

(Golden-Hubbell) P.D. 6:06

8 I'LL GET BY (AS LONG AS I HAVE YOU)

(Turk-Ahlert) Fred Ahlert Music/Cromwell Music/
Pencil Mark Music-ASCAP 6:36

COLEMAN HAWKINS **tenor saxophone**

TOMMY FLANAGAN **piano**

WENDELL MARSHALL **bass**

OSIE JOHNSON **drums**

Recorded by RUDY VAN GELDER at Van Gelder Studio,
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The image displays a collection of 50 vinyl record covers from the RVG Remasters series. The covers are arranged in a grid, with a large 'RVG REMASTERS' logo prominently displayed in the center. The covers feature various artists, including Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, Duke Ellington, and many others. The covers are color-coded and feature different designs, including portraits, abstract art, and text. The overall aesthetic is that of a classic vinyl collection, with a focus on high-quality remasters of iconic jazz recordings.