

sonny rollins quintet with
kenny dorham and max roach
prestige 7095



ROLLINS PLAYS FOR BIRD
SONNY ROLLINS

SONNY ROLLINS tenor saxophone KENNY DORHAM trumpet WADE LEGGE piano
GEORGE MORROW bass MAX ROACH drums

1 MEDLEY 26:54 (I REMEMBER YOU • MY
MELANCHOLY BABY • OLD FOLKS • THEY CAN'T
TAKE THAT AWAY FROM ME • JUST FRIENDS •
MY LITTLE SUEDE SHOES • STAR EYES)

2 KIDS KNOW 11:39

**3 I'VE GROWN ACCUSTOMED
TO YOUR FACE 4:54**

*** 4 THE HOUSE I LIVE IN 9:22**

*** bonus track**



*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, Hackensack, NJ; October 5, 1956.
Supervision by BOB WEINSTOCK Remastering, 2007—RUDY VAN GELDER (Van Gelder Studio, Englewood Cliffs, NJ)
All transfers were made from the analog master tapes to digital at 24-bit resolution.
Notes by IRA GITLER

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SONNY ROLLINS

SONNY ROLLINS tenor saxophone
KENNY DORHAM trumpet
WADE LEGGE piano GEORGE MORROW bass
MAX ROACH drums

When Charlie Parker died, people who never had done anything in recognition of his great talent, suddenly rushed to the mourner's bench and delivered eulogies. This record is by musicians who knew him intimately, appreciated him tremendously during his lifetime and felt his loss far more acutely than any of the self-styled sufferers.

But this is no grand memorial. That was left by Bird himself and is added to daily in so many little (and big) ways. This is a simple tribute in the form of a medley composed of seven tunes that were recorded and, for the most part, played often by Parker.

The medley was chosen by Sonny Rollins, the most important

saxophonist carrying on and enriching the Parker tradition. Sonny also chose the musicians to help him play the tribute. At the time, the five together embodied the Max Roach Quintet. Leader Roach and Kenny Dorham had played with Parker in his quintets and were well qualified to take part in the tribute. While Wade Legge and George Morrow never worked with Bird, their playing is in keeping with the tenets of the Parker tradition.

Oddly enough, the seven tunes are all from the post-1950 Parker repertoire.

Sonny heralds the entire medley by echoing Bird's introduction to "Parker's Mood." A piano introduction by Legge leads Rollins into

ROLLINS PLAYS FOR BIRD

**MEDLEY: I REMEMBER YOU • MY MELANCHOLY KIDS KNOW
BABY • OLD FOLKS • THEY CAN'T TAKE THAT I'VE GROWN ACCUSTOMED
AWAY FROM ME • JUST FRIENDS • MY LITTLE TO YOUR FACE
SUEDE SHOES • STAR EYES THE HOUSE I LIVE IN* * bonus track**

"I Remember You." The sequence consists of one chorus of melody, one of improvisation and a third in which exchanges with Roach ensue for the first half before Sonny takes it out. This format is followed on each number up to "Star Eyes." Wade modulates into "Melancholy Baby" which is Kenny's vehicle and then takes "Old Folks" himself. Sonny returns for "They Can't Take that Away from Me" using the triple tonguing that Bird employed on his recording. Kenny then plays a nostalgic "Just Friends," Wade dons "My Little Suede Shoes" and then segues neatly into "Star Eyes" which is the only number in the medley to feature both horns. Sonny and Kenny

have two choruses apiece. Wade one and there is one chorus each of Sonny with Max and Kenny with Max.

In addition to the medley, there are two other independent selections presented here.

Sonny's intriguing original in 3/4 time, "Kids Know," gives everyone a chance to stretch out including Max who contributes one of his intellectual-emotional gems.

"I've Grown Accustomed to Your Face" from *My Fair Lady* is a Rollins solo except for a piano interlude by Legge.

— **IRA GITLER**

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

ROLLINS PLAYS FOR BIRD REVISITED

MY ORIGINAL NOTES for *Rollins Plays for Bird* tell the story of this homage, separating it from the rushed-out, Charlie Parker reissues that quickly followed his death in 1955. Bird was like a beacon—Max Roach compared him to the sun—giving off light to two generations (with more to come) of musicians. His brilliance drew many young musicians to the alto sax but also rerouted more than a few others to the tenor.

Sonny Rollins wasn't in either camp. Originally drawn to the alto by Louis Jordan, Rollins discovered Coleman Hawkins and switched to tenor. Someone hunched him to Lester Young, and he was well aware of Ben Webster, Don Byas, and Dexter Gordon, too.

Rollins absorbed many influences including the ideas of musicians other than saxophonists. He was also able to assert his strong personality into a style that grew in individuality through the years. I remember hearing some musicians at a jam session in the late Forties say, "It's all right for an alto player to sound like Bird but not a tenor player." Sonny didn't have that conflict.

Writing about this music once more gave me the opportunity to listen to it again in its entirety, something I haven't done for a long time. It is very unhyphenated, easy listening, if you get my drift. (I like to drift on a reed at times.) The format that uses Wade Legge's piano as the link to this classic bouquet of songs works beautifully and helps to make the medley flow. The melodies and their lyrical interpretations by the soloists, Wade included, take you into an atmosphere that is relaxed but far from soporific. With the steady George Morrow and the omni-rhythmic Roach on board, everything is everything and Bird is on the wing.

His previous "Valse Hot," and the "Kids Know" in this collection, was inspiring some writers to refer to Sonny as the new (and hip) "Waltz King." (This was a reference to Wayne King, "The Waltz King" of yore; and if you remember Wayne King you're as old—or older!—than I am.)

"Kids" is a charming, uplifting melody with the previously mentioned lyricism going and gives us some of Max's special "everything." Actually, the song was named by Prestige's president/producer Bob Weinstock. It was his infirmation of the kind of innate knowledge of certain things that children have.

"I've Grown Accustomed to Your Face" is a tender reminder of how Sonny put his own stamp on the playing of ballads, coming behind the tenor masters mentioned above.

There was one more song recorded on October 5, 1956 that didn't make it on to the original LP or the first CD reissue. "The House I Live In," checking in at 9:22, would have put the LP time over the acceptable limit. (If you had too many minutes on an LP the grooves would have to be thinner and there was a distinct danger of their walls breaking down.) Instead "The House I Live In" was issued on a Rollins LP, *Sonny Boy* and was re-issued on a CD version of the same. Here it finally rejoins its chronological context.

There is a history to "The House I Live In" which explains how Rollins eventually came to do it. I first heard it on a recording by the blues/folk singer Josh White. It was written by Abel Meeropol (who wrote under the name of Lewis Allen—one of Billie Holiday's most renowned recordings was his "Strange Fruit") and Earl Robinson, composer of "Ballad for Americans," an epic musical history of America, first recorded by Paul Robinson and also later recorded by Bing Crosby. (Incidentally, Robinson's son is the clarinetist, Perry Robinson.)

In 1945 Frank Sinatra sang "The House I Live In" on record and in a short film of the same name that won an Honorary Academy Award the following year. It is a song that espoused tolerance among the different races and religions. "Tolerance" was a word of the time, long before the Civil Rights battles of the Sixties and the word "integration" came into usage. You were being asked to at least "tolerate" your neighbor, weak but certainly a few steps up from the lynchings in "the gallant South" of "Strange Fruit."

Rollins has recounted that Sinatra came to the school facing the East River that Sonny was attending (Manhattan's Benjamin Franklin High). The student body was a mixture of Italian-Americans from East Harlem and African-Americans from West Harlem. Sinatra sang "The House I Live In." Sonny never forgot the song or its import on that occasion.

He sets the stage with an out-of-tempo intro, backed by Legge, and punctuated by a brief, muted bugle call from Dorham. Then he states the sometimes hymn-like melody at length before taking off into a typically inventive and expansive solo. After a mellow solo from Legge, Sonny returns to trade thoughts with brush-master Roach, reshape the melody and then take it out with a restatement of that melody, and a stately tag. Just because he quotes "Mairzy Doats" and "Jeepers Creepers" during the course of his improvisations doesn't mean he's not serious.

In my oral history, *Swing to Bop* (Oxford University Press, 1985) I quoted Sonny from an interview he gave to a magazine called *Soul*. He said: "Jazz has always been a music of integration. In other words, there were definitely lines where blacks would be and whites would begin to mix a little bit. I mean, jazz was not just a music: it was a social force in this country, and it was talking about freedom and people enjoying things for what they were and not having to worry about whether they were supposed to be white, black, and all this stuff. Jazz has always been the music that had this kind of spirit. Now I believe for that reason, the people that would push jazz have *not* pushed jazz because that's what jazz means. A lot of times, jazz means no barriers."

Sonny Rollins: Jazz Ambassador. Barrier breaker. Great American.

—IRA GITLER

November 2007

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1 MEDLEY: 26:54

I REMEMBER YOU

(Mercer-Schertzinger) Paramount Music-ASCAP

MY MELANCHOLY BABY

(Burnett-Norton) Shapiro, Bernstein/Jerry Vogel Music-ASCAP

OLD FOLKS

(Hill-Robison) Warner Bros. Music-ASCAP

THEY CAN'T TAKE THAT AWAY FROM ME

(Gershwin-Gershwin) Warner-Chappell-ASCAP

JUST FRIENDS

(Lewis-Klenner) SBK Robbins Catalog-ASCAP

MY LITTLE SUEDE SHOES

(Charlie Parker) Atlantic Music-BMI

STAR EYES

(Raye-DePaul) SBK Feist Catalog-ASCAP

2 KIDS KNOW 11:39

(Sonny Rollins) Prestige Music-BMI

**3 I'VE GROWN ACCUSTOMED
TO YOUR FACE** 4:54

(Lerner-Loewe) Chappell & Co.-ASCAP

***4 THE HOUSE I LIVE IN** 9:22

(Allen-Robinson) Chappell & Co.-ASCAP

* bonus track

SONNY ROLLINS **tenor saxophone**

KENNY DORHAM **trumpet**

WADE LEGGE **piano**

GEORGE MORROW **bass**

MAX ROACH **drums**

Recorded by RUDY VAN GELDER at Van Gelder Studio, Hackensack, NJ; October 5, 1956.

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The image displays a collection of 48 jazz album covers, primarily from the Prestige and Riverside labels, arranged in a 6x8 grid. The covers feature various artists, including Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, Duke Ellington, and many others. A large, semi-transparent 'RVG REMASTERS' logo is centered over the grid, indicating that these are remastered versions of the original recordings. The covers are diverse in design, with some featuring black and white photos, others in color, and some with abstract or graphic elements. The text on the covers includes album titles, artist names, and sometimes track listings or labels like 'Prestige' or 'Riverside'.