

PRESTIGE
HI-FI LP 7044

MILES DAVIS / COLLECTORS' ITEMS





COLLECTORS' ITEMS

MILES DAVIS



MILES DAVIS trumpet, with on 1-4: SONNY ROLLINS, "CHARLIE CHAN" tenor saxophones
WALTER BISHOP piano PERCY HEATH bass PHILLY JOE JONES drums
on 5-7: SONNY ROLLINS tenor saxophone TOMMY FLANAGAN piano
PAUL CHAMBERS bass ARTHUR TAYLOR drums

1 THE SERPENT'S TOOTH (TAKE 1) 7:04
2 THE SERPENT'S TOOTH (TAKE 2) 6:20
3 'ROUND MIDNIGHT 7:07
4 COMPULSION 5:47

5 NO LINE 5:43
6 VIERD BLUES 6:55
7 IN YOUR OWN SWEET WAY 4:37



*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*

#1, 2 and 4 recorded by Bob Lee (#3 engineer unknown) at WOR Studios, New York City; January 30, 1953

#5-7 Recorded by RUDY VAN GELDER at Van Gelder Studio, Hackensack, NJ; March 16, 1956

Supervision by IRA GITLER (#1-4) and BOB WEINSTOCK (#5-7) Remastering, 2008—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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The term "collectors' item" seems to have died weeping on the grave of the 78-RPM record. No longer do legions of record hunters haunt musty shops on Saturday afternoons in hope of finding Pres playing clarinet on "Texas Shuffle," Bird with McShann, old Louies or Beiderbeckes. They are all on LP.

It is true that many collectors lived up to the specific meaning of the word. It was the label and master number which interested them far beyond the music. To them, records were like coins or postage stamps, and this type of collector does not concern me. It is the other fellow who used to find a J.J. Johnson solo on a Savannah Churchill record, Milt Jackson with Dinah Washington, Lester Young with Glen Hardman, or Wardell Gray with Earl Hines and rejoice in the little gems of music that he had found; he is the jazz lover who will want this LP.

As I said before, many of the old out-of-print items have been reissued on LP. Now we "collect" LPs. In addition to bringing back the obsolete 78s, the LP has enabled us to hear, for instance, many of Charlie Parker's great passages through the issuance of his rejected takes which, because of their abbreviated nature, never would have found their way on to a 78-RPM disc.

The sessions that went into the makeup of this LP were taped three years apart and in a way the second has a lot to do with the first being issued.

Session one, like session two, is under the leadership of Miles Davis. Sonny Rollins is a sideman on both. However, the thing in common that really links these sessions is the abbreviated nature of each. Separately neither

would produce enough listening time to sustain a commercial product. (The customer expects, and should get, a certain amount of listening time on each LP.) Together there is much music, music that without the medium of the 12-inch LP would never have been heard by the jazz public. Although you may walk into your record shop and purchase this album without too much difficulty, it is nevertheless a "collectors' item" by its very nature.

The first session was recorded on January 30, 1953 and has Miles flanked by the tenor saxes of Sonny Rollins and "Charlie Chan." This is only the second time that Charlie had recorded on tenor and he came into the studio with a brand-new King that he hadn't touched before that day. His sound was a deep-throated one which, I'm told, moved toward a purer, lighter, albeit big sound if he stayed with the tenor for any length of time.

"Compulsion" is a swinging Davis opus with two choruses apiece by Miles, Charlie, and Sonny with the group riffing at intervals during Miles's and Charlie's choruses. Then Walter Bishop, a most flowing modern pianist, plays two more choruses before the theme is restated.

"The Serpent's Tooth" is presented in two takes. Take 1 is medium tempo and the solo order is Miles, Sonny, and Charlie for two choruses apiece followed by Walter Bishop for one. Then Miles exchanges conversation with Philly Joe Jones. On take 2 the tempo moves up a bit. The solo order and their lengths are the same except that in the conversations with Philly Joe, Charlie and Sonny, in that order, join in after Miles.

COLLECTORS' ITEMS

THE SERPENT'S TOOTH (TAKE 1) NO LINE
THE SERPENT'S TOOTH (TAKE 2) VIERD BLUES
'ROUND MIDNIGHT
COMPULSION
IN YOUR OWN SWEET WAY

"Round Midnight" was 'round six p.m. when it was recorded on this particular day and due to circumstances, new sadness were instilled onto Monk's already melancholy air. For various reasons the date had not jelled to expectations. The engineer, who hadn't helped much, went off duty and told us that the studio would close at six o'clock and that another engineer would take over for the last half hour. After a few unsuccessful attempts at "Well, You Needn't," it was decided to close with "Midnight." This was at a quarter to six. Miles and Charlie are the horns with the latter playing obbligatos to the melody statement and crossing the bridges alone at both beginning and end. His opening solo is full of the pain and disappointment he knew too well and is an emotionally moving document as such. Miles cries some too.

Session two is of more recent vintage (March 16, 1956) and has a different feeling to it.

One of Miles's sensitive muted statements introduces the captivating, reflective Dave Brubeck ballad, "In Your Own Sweet Way." Sonny Rollins shows the results of three years' maturation. After Tommy Flanagan's solo, Miles's mute restates the theme.

"Vierd Blues" features an open but nevertheless subdued Miles who once again shows that a modicum of notes can go a long way when used with understanding. Sonny Rollins has a building solo and Tommy Flanagan (consistency is thy name) warms as usual in his spotlight time.

"No Line" is a blues of another than "Vierd Blues." Miles leaps in with a muted shade and Sonny picks it up with an alternately flowing

and time-breaking solo. Tommy Flanagan, another of the talented Detroiters (what a well of talent the Motor City has turned out to be) and one who has helped to make this year's piano crop such a rich one, plays a lightly-swinging solo which shows him to be an excellent exponent of the Bud Powell through Hank Jones style. Pianists like Flanagan, Ray Bryant, Barry Harris, and Mal Waldron, to name some of the bright young modernists who became known this year, proved that simplicity, taste, and direct emotion are much preferred to filigrees, extraneous matter, and the keyboard extravagances of technique displays. If the latter group of characteristics comes with the "two-handed" pianists then I'll take the "one-handed" pianists and may Phineas Newborn, Jr. take the hindermost.

The digging-in swinging of Paul Chambers and Art Taylor, which is heard throughout the session, stands alone at the end of "No Line" as Miles, who blows his second solo after Flanagan's, decides that he has spoken his piece and trails off. So things end as they began with no line (no formal melody statement) and hence the title.

I appreciate a well-integrated performance but will always prefer moments of sincere-emotion jazz with mistakes to the slick product which is too often palmed off as jazz today. Whether it be old jazz or new, I guess I'm kind of a purist.

—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*

COLLECTORS' ITEMS REVISITED

THINKING ABOUT THE FIRST of the two sessions that make up this disc sends my memory back to Boston when in late January 1953 I was dispatched by Prestige Records' president, Bob Weinstock, to travel from the Apple to Beantown on assignment to record, on successive days, a trio led by pianist Al Vega and alto saxophonist Charlie Mariano's quintet.

During the time spent in Boston, my mind was periodically redialing thoughts of the recording session looming large upon my return to New York; a reunion of Miles Davis and Charlie Parker, with Sonny Rollins as the third voice in the front line. The idea of being in the studio with all these idols, especially Bird, was creating all kinds of feelings for me. In addition to trepidation there was excitement, and I told Mariano (one of Bird's disciples), and the rest of his group, all about the upcoming event.

Weinstock had two strong wishes—to record Lester Young and Charlie Parker. He never did get to record Pres, but this was his opportunity for Bird to be on Prestige. Since Bird was under contract to Norman Granz at the time, it was decided to have him play tenor sax rather than alto. He had played tenor in the Earl Hines band of 1943 and recorded on tenor for a Savoy Miles Davis date in 1947. I called a rehearsal—a rarity at Prestige—in the week before I went to Boston. Lugging a rented tenor into the rehearsal studio I found Bird waiting. Miles and the others never showed.

The next day Bird came by Prestige (at the time we were located on 10th Avenue between 51st and 52nd) to get an advance on his recording fee. In order to cash the check I walked with Bird over to 49th and Broadway where the Colony Record Shop was located. Going down Broadway to Colony we encountered a blind accordionist who was kind of a regular along the "Main Stem"; Bird requested "All the Things You Are," and on our way back from Colony he was playing it. Bird said to him, "Nice changes," and dropped a quarter in his tin cup. It has been romanticized in one telling that it was Bird's last quarter.

On January 30th, at WOR Studios, we were scheduled to start at 2:00 p.m. and go until 5:00. I was unhappy with the absence of Doug Hawkins, their number one engineer with whom I had worked several times. His replacement for the afternoon, Bob Lee, I had worked with just once. Two o'clock arrived and only Percy Heath and Walter Bishop were punctual. Bird got there shortly afterward and Sonny Rollins was there by the time that Miles was becoming conspicuous by his absence. I figured that he and Philly Joe Jones were together in pursuit of some fortification but Philly arrived on his own. I don't remember the exact time Miles showed, probably approaching 3:00. It had not only delayed the starting time but enabled an unscheduled, pre-game event to take place.

At previous sessions I had done, the menu of refreshments had been varied; sandwiches and sodas, coffee, beer, occasionally hard stuff, sometimes nothing. Here I ordered a fifth of Gordon's gin and twelve bottles of beer to be shared among the six musicians and myself. I could not have predicted that Parker, even given his reputation as a prodigious consumer of various potions and substances who, most of the time, was capable of performing at a high (no pun intended) level, would do what he did? Bird appropriated the Gordon's and in two chug-a-lugs left the bottle virtually empty. No chaser.

Eventually the music for the first piece was passed out. Bird didn't do the same but he was cat-napping in his chair (not nodding, mind you) and Miles wasn't too happy with that or the fact that the band was having trouble with the theme. After all, they were running it down for the first time. Once the tape machines were activated, the takes were breaking down even before they got to the first soloist. When they did reach that stage, Miles was cracking notes and there were more stoppages. This was long before I would become a hockey coach but I left the control room with an intuitive attempt to shock Miles out of his lethargy. I announced, "Man, you ain't playing shit!"

Almost immediately he began to pack up his trumpet in making preparations to leave. "Cat says I'm not playing shit," he answered the other musicians' questioning comments. In his autobiography, *Miles*, he is quoted to the effect that Bird talked him out of leaving but it was really yours truly, afraid that my job would leave with him. (In retrospect I think he was bluffing.) In his book he says that Bird drank a quart of vodka and quotes himself and Bird as saying things early on that were actually exchanged at the conclusion of the session.

We finally completed "Compulsion" and moved on to "The Serpent's Tooth," the authorship of both claimed by Miles. They were untitled until I named them, the second inspired by a line from Shakespeare. There were rumors that Jimmy Heath had been the composer and many years after, he confirmed that he had penned "Serpent's Tooth" but not "Compulsion." That one still remains a mystery. Miles had originally planned to use Jimmy in the other tenor slot and record his composition. When Jimmy confronted him about the question of authorship Miles paid him directly out-of-pocket on several occasions.

The first take of "Serpent's Tooth" finds Miles in better form, quoting from "The Blacksmith Blues" and "Heart and Soul," with Bird making his tenor sound more like a baritone. Take 2 is faster than take 1. Miles again uses "Heart and Soul" and Sonny quotes "Anything You Can Do," which he hints at in take 1. Some pundits suggested that he was sending a message to Bird, but as Sonny had told me, there was no such intention. In the "fours" between the two on take 2, you'll notice that Bird comes in a bit late on one of his. Sonny actually nudged him with his elbow to alert him that his turn had come around again. This was a day where Bird took Sonny aside and gave him a "do as I say not as I do" lecture. Sonny did just that, with regrets that Bird did not live to see it happen.

As the afternoon moved closer to evening I knew we needed more music recorded. Bob Lee said he had to leave and that the studio would close at six. This was unprecedented. Weinstock never wanted to go overtime but there was always that option. Here it was taken away, with no warning. I don't remember the name of the replacement engineer. It was the last thing on my mind at that moment.

After several attempts at "Well, You Needn't" in which Miles's chops were showing signs of fatigue, I had a brainstorm. "Round Midnight," and the nature of its tempo, would give us more minutes toward an LP and be less taxing on Miles. Bird and Miles would be the main soloists and Sonny would cross the opening and closing bridges. As my original notes indicate, by the time the session reached vinyl I had forgotten this last fact and credited them to Bird. It was only after Danish critic Erik Weidemann pointed out that it was Sonny, did I realize my goof.

Miles, Bird, and Sonny rose to the occasion, as great musicians will do, and taped a masterpiece. At the last note of "Midnight" the clock on the wall hit 6:00.

When we were moving out of the door Miles said to Bird, "I never did that to you on your dates," and Bird, calling after him down the long hall, countered with, "All right, Lily Pons" (the great coloratura soprano of that time) and followed it with, in booming tones, "To produce beauty we must suffer pain. From the oyster comes the pearl."

The session of March 16, 1956 is one of the most beautiful, laid-back, floating-on-a-cloud experiences one can have. The first time I listened to it, I replayed it three times. Side note: "Vieri Blues" is the same piece that Miles later recorded as "Trane's Blues," and there credits to John Coltrane, as it was when Trane first recorded it on a Kenny Drew session, years before.

Until it was combined with the 1956 date, the Miles-Bird-Sonny session lay in the vaults. Meanwhile, on May 15, 1953 Bird and Dizzy Gillespie recorded their famed Massey Hall concert in Toronto. When that record was issued "Charlie Chan" was used as Bird's pseudonym. That's how it came to be used for *Collectors' Items*.

—IRA GITLER
October 2008

Note from the Reissue Producers

This Rudy Van Gelder Remasters series reissue of *Collectors' Items* affords us the opportunity to finally correct a discographical error that was propagated in previous CD editions of this album—the mis-crediting of Rudy Van Gelder as the recording engineer for the January 30, 1953 recordings of "The Serpent's Tooth," "Round Midnight," and "Compulsion." (Van Gelder did indeed record all the tracks from the March 16, 1956 session that appear on *Collectors' Items*—"No Line," "Vieri Blues," and "In Your Own Sweet Way.") And while the 1953 recordings fall short of Van Gelder's sonic benchmark—understandably so, as he did not record them—they too reap the benefits of his Midas mastering touch, making this Rudy Van Gelder Remasters series edition of *Collectors' Items* all the more collectible.

—Nick Phillips and Bob Porter

RUDY VAN GELDER REMASTERS

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JOHN COLTRANE—Standard Coltrane (PRS-31221)
MILES DAVIS—Collectors' Items (PRS-31222)
SONNY ROLLINS—Worktime (PRS-31223)

1 THE SERPENT'S TOOTH (TAKE 1) 7:04

2 THE SERPENT'S TOOTH (TAKE 2) 6:20

3 'ROUND MIDNIGHT 7:07

(Monk-Williams-Hanighen) Warner Bros. Music-ASCAP/
Thelonious Music-BMI

4 COMPULSION 5:47

5 NO LINE 5:43

6 VIERD BLUES 6:55

7 IN YOUR OWN SWEET WAY 4:37

(Dave Brubeck) Derry Music-BMI

All selections composed by Miles Davis (Hendon Music Inc. o/b/o Second
Floor Music/Songs of Universal o/b/o Jazz Horn Music Corp.-BMI),
except as indicated.

MILES DAVIS trumpet

with

Tracks 1-4:

SONNY ROLLINS tenor saxophone

"CHARLIE CHAN" tenor saxophone

WALTER BISHOP piano

PERCY HEATH bass

PHILLY JOE JONES drums



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Tracks 5-7:

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Remastering, 2008—RUDY VAN GELDER
(Van Gelder Studio, Englewood Cliffs, NJ)

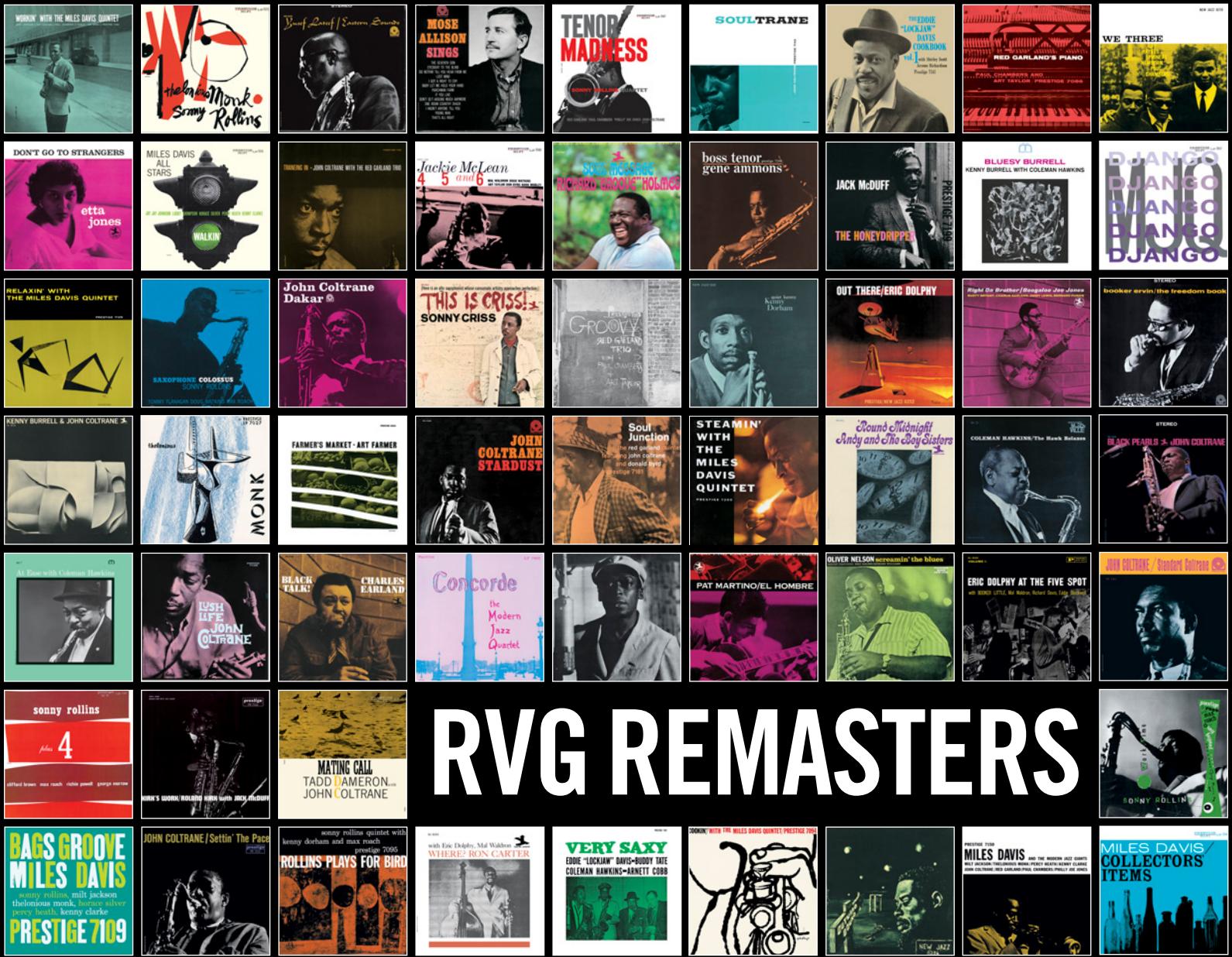
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Editorial—Rikka Arnold

Additional assistance—Larissa Collins, Evelyn Haddad, Jimmy Hole

RUDY VAN GELDER REMASTERS



RVG REMASTERS