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# sonny rollins

*plus* 4

Hannan

clifford brown   max roach   richie powell   george morrow



**RVG**  
REMASTERS

PLUS FOUR  
**SONNY ROLLINS**



SONNY ROLLINS tenor saxophone  
CLIFFORD BROWN trumpet (except #4) RICHIE POWELL piano  
GEORGE MORROW bass MAX ROACH drums

- 1 VALSE HOT 8:36
- 2 KISS AND RUN 7:07
- 3 I FEEL A SONG COMING ON 5:12
- 4 COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS INSTEAD OF SHEEP 2:31
- 5 PENT-UP HOUSE 8:52



*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; March 22, 1956.  
Supervision by BOB WEINSTOCK Remastering, 2006—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

CLIFFORD BROWN trumpet (except #4) RICHIE POWELL piano

GEORGE MORROW bass MAX ROACH drums

Slowly but surely, Sonny Rollins has started to get some of the recognition due him. His recordings, his appearances as a member of the Max Roach–Clifford Brown group and, perhaps most importantly, the growing list of tenormen he is influencing have all contributed to this newfound esteem.

Musicians have recognized Sonny as the important new reed voice, one who not only can swing but can also get inside the chords and “stretch out” on them.

When I read critics delivering praise to the young tenormen who, although they swing, never really get their teeth into more than a few chords in a row and invariably skim along the surface choosing the duller portion of the chord, I scratch my head in wonder. The main irritant to me is not the opposition to Sonny or the praise of lesser musicians but the lack of understanding of the whole school of tenor playing. When there were only the Hawkins, Young, Berry, and Evans influences to ascertain, the critics’ task was simpler. Today’s tenormen have been filtered through so many influences that sometimes their various styles seem to elude the critics’ “hearing.” It must have been Bird who confused them. They may acknowledge him because they

would appear ridiculous if they didn’t, but they couldn’t have had any real feeling for his music if they don’t appreciate Sonny. This is not to say that Sonny has reached Bird’s pinnacle but he has gotten Bird’s message and captured the spirit of his music. But back to critics. One of them has labeled Sonny’s style “hard bop,” a not entirely accurate but too convenient labeling which suffers not so much from this labeling but from the manner said critic dumps anyone who plays even a Stittian, much less Rollins-like, phrase into this large cubbyhole he has built with his do-it-yourself kit.

In the table below I have attempted to illuminate the styles of some of the contemporary tenormen of this school, ones who are affiliated with it directly and others who are peripheral. A detailed explanation might entail a chapter in a book and I don’t have the space, but there are interesting observations to be made. For instance, Dexter Gordon, who was one of John Coltrane’s first influences when Gordon was playing in the Forties, is now influenced by the same man who has been a more recent factor in Coltrane’s playing, Sonny Rollins.

I also would have liked to bring in more of Pres’s disciples (Sims, Cohn)

# PLUS FOUR

VALSE HOT

KISS AND RUN

I FEEL A SONG COMING ON

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS INSTEAD OF SHEEP  
PENT-UP HOUSE

and their little brothers (Perkins, Kamuca) but again space prevents me.

Through the courtesy of EmArcy, Clifford Brown and Max Roach appear here with Sonny, and the two other regular members of Brown-Roach Inc.—Richie Powell and George Morrow—are on hand too.

“Valse Hot,” Sonny’s composition, is the first successful jazz waltz since Thelonious Monk interpreted “Carolina Moon.” Max, incidentally, was also the drummer on that one. There is an introductory interlude before the main melody and this is restated before each solo. Sonny and Brownie swing tenderly around the floor in turn, Richie has the third, and Max fills out everyone’s dance card with his solo.

Sam Coslow, who gave us “My Old Flame” among other fine songs, penned “Kiss and Run.” There’s more “running” than kissing in Sonny’s version. He and Brownie are fleet but not fleeting. These two musicians are perfect examples of how vital the Parker-Gillespie tradition is when played at its best. Richie Powell shows brother Bud’s influence but remains his own man. After his solo, Sonny, Max, and Brownie converse for a chorus and then Sonny and Brownie make it a two-way talk for one more.

Everyone keeps coming on and on in “I Feel a Song Coming On.” Max, who shows how to swing a soloist and never be monotonous, keeps things moving at a fantastic clip as the soloists cruise and cook at top speed.

Sonny delivers “Count Your Blessings” as a medium bounce rather than as a ballad with the help of an interlude by Richie Powell.

The most engaging Rollins original, “Pent-Up House” has Brownie and Sonny playing pat-a-cake with the lead figures of the melody line. Brownie, who is in warm form throughout the entire proceedings, comes in with George Morrow and Max strolling behind him for two choruses before Richie joins with his comping. Sonny picks up Brownie’s tag line and strolls some himself in the same manner. Both hornmen are searching and heartfelt soloists in what is the high point of the set to me. After Richie finds a vein of Silver, Max mines a Roach gem and leads into the final statement.

—IRA GITLER

Original liner notes

**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

## PLUS FOUR REVISITED

**I THINK WHAT GAVE ME THE IDEA** to do the chart at the bottom of the original notes was my interest in the influences that helped shape the developing styles of musicians, tracing the lineage and the cross-pollinations, particularly in this period when Charlie Parker, who impacted players of all instrumental categories, entered the realm occupied by Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young. Saxophonists who may have begun with Hawkins, such as Ben Webster, Chu Berry, Herschel Evans, and Don Byas, developed their own voices and became influences themselves.

If I could revise the chart today I would tweak it a bit. (Hindsight, informed by more extensive listening, while not necessarily 20/20, is often illuminating.)

I certainly would capitalize the y in young on Siitt's list; make Rollins completely lower case on both Mobley's and Gordon's; and add a lower-case coltrane to Gordon's.

Hawkins came before Young in Rollins's development so I would place him—with a capital H—

above Young. There is also reason to consider adding a byas and a gordon to Sonny's influences.

Finally, I must have heard something in Coltrane's playing that had me put a rollins on his dossier but I can't recall the solo that prompted that impulse. (It definitely wasn't on Impulse.)

I can pinpoint when I really become aware of Sonny's deep love for Lester Young. It was a broadcast from the Cafe Bohemia (either from late 1955 or 1956) by a Zoot Sims quintet that had trumpeter Jerry Lloyd in the front line. The tune was "Jerry's Jaunt" with Zoot on alto and Sonny's tenor a guest horn for that one selection. When his turn came he played two choruses as an outright homage to Prez before going for himself. In 1957 on "Moritat" (*Saxophone Colossus*), and "Paul's Pal" (*Tenor Madness*), he used a Young approach at points along his way.

After returning to New York from Chicago as a member of what was known as Brown-Roach, Inc. he recorded an LP called *Work Time* for Prestige in December 1955. I'll never forget how excited Miles Davis was when he heard it. Bob Weinstock had the

acetates from the session in his back office at the Prestige store. Miles was playing them over and over and I was sitting there marveling right along with him. After a couple of hearings he was so enthused that he telephoned tenor saxophonist Allen Eager and played "There's No Business Like Show Business" for him.

A new, mature, confident (for him) Sonny Rollins had announced himself anew to the Jazz Capital of the World and beyond. Max Roach and bassist George Morrow were on the recording. In March of 1956, the other members of Brown/Roach, pianist Richie Powell and trumpeter Clifford Brown joined their working-band cohorts in the quintet for *Sonny Rollins Plus 4*. The rapport developed among the five in less than a year, was of a kind later exemplified by the New York Knickerbockers' championship teams of the early 1970s.

Within the overall empathy of Brown/Roach were interior connections: Roach, a master soloist himself, with all the soloists; and the bonding of Rollins and Brown. "Pent-Up House" shows their oneness in bold relief. Brownie's tragic death three months after this recording robbed the jazz world of a great musician with so much more to say. The same could be applied to Richie Powell who died in the same automobile accident. He hadn't yet reached greatness, but was just coming into his own.

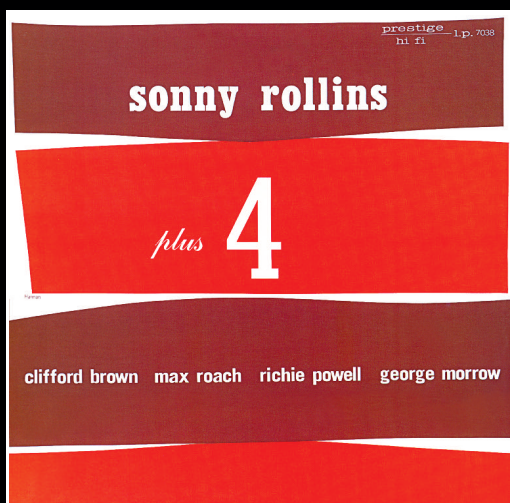
The standards were all given personal treatments and Rollins's originals were just that. "Valse Hot" (I should have caught the Prez influence in his solo then) is a derivation from "Over the Rainbow" changes. This reminded me that his "Silk

'n Satin," recorded on the *Moving Out* date of August 1954, is based on "All of a Sudden My Heart Sings." To boot, the album's title track has its chordal basis in "Chinatown My Chinatown."

Sonny has always had a head for picking and playing old tunes but he also has used them to write his own lines. He knows a good melody when he hears one and, as a soloist, he is a melodist at any and all tempos.

Why did I do that chart? I think there was a little of my love of sports including their statistical side. From childhood I rooted for both the baseball and football New York Giants. Maybe I figured I should do one on the Tenor Giant (not yet Saxophone Colossus) himself. After all, Sugar Hill wasn't far from the Polo Grounds.

—IRA GITLER  
October 2006



**1 VALSE HOT**

(Sonny Rollins) Prestige Music-BMI 8:36

**2 KISS AND RUN**

(Sam Coslow) Music Sales-ASCAP 7:07

**3 I FEEL A SONG COMING ON**

(McHugh-Fields-Oppenheimer) EMI Robbins-ASCAP 5:12

**4 COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS INSTEAD OF SHEEP**

(Irving Berlin) Irving Berlin Music-ASCAP 2:31

**5 PENT-UP HOUSE**

(Rollins) Prestige-BMI 8:52

**SONNY ROLLINS** tenor saxophone

**CLIFFORD BROWN** trumpet (except #4)

**RICHIE POWELL** piano

**GEORGE MORROW** bass

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Cover design—Tom Hannan

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The image displays a collection of 50 vinyl record covers from the RVG Remasters series, arranged in a 5x10 grid. The covers feature various jazz artists, including Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Jackie McLean, Sonny Rollins, Eric Dolphy, and many others. The central part of the grid is dominated by a large, bold logo that reads "RVG REMASTERS". The covers are diverse in color and design, reflecting the unique style of each artist and the remastering process.