

THE DANISH RADIO JAZZ ORCHESTRA & JIM MCNEELY PLAY BILL EVANS

Bill Evans was one of the most influential pianists in modern jazz. Few pianists after 1965 have been unaffected by his innovations. Among jazz audiences too, Evans the pianist is a central figure, whose music is played and celebrated still.

Evans the *composer* is less known, despite the fact that many of his compositions have appealed directly to large audiences. Bill Evans wrote within the same tradition he pursued as an interpreter; The Great American Songbook. The majority of his compositions are epic in melody and rich in harmonic structure. A few of his pieces, for example "Waltz for Debby" or "Very Early", have gained status of jazz standards. Others, after being supplied with lyrics, have been interpreted by several vocalists.

One could easily base a musical on the music of Bill Evans. Much of his music has the sweetness of a good musical tune. None of his melodies however, have the saccharine sweetness of a real musical hit, so it would probably not be a Broadway show.

In this first big band project based on Evans' compositions and pieces associated with his name, the focus has not been on the sweetness in his music as much as the rich possibilities inherent in the harmonic structures on which he built his compositions.

There is a major difference between writing a good tune and writing a tune that provides a good vehicle for improvisation, and not many are good at both – at the same time. As a jazz musician, Evans was very aware of this, and virtually all his pieces are influenced by this awareness; they are good improvisational vehicles. And that is why they have found their way to this project.

Another interesting fact becomes evident when examining his book of almost 60 individual pieces. Only every fifth composition can be described as a ballad, or was intended as a slow tune. The vast majority of his work was in medium or up-tempo, and many of his tunes were waltzes. Considering Evans' reputation as perhaps the greatest ballad interpreter in jazz and a subdued impressionist, these are surprising figures.

Besides: most of his melody lines speak to us with astonishing immediacy. You will find far more sweetness and innocence than pain in his compositions. This recording does not pay tribute to Evans as most of us remember him; the artist who communicated his dearly paid-for experience with shocking power. It pays tribute to a composer with a very wide range of expression. The experience - not Evans' but their own – is inherent in Jim McNeely's delicate and unsurpassed arrangements and in the fiery solos of the members of the Danish Radio Jazz Orchestra.

This is big band jazz to sing along with. And perhaps another Grammy nomination for the world famous Danish orchestra. Under the leadership of Jim McNeely, they sparkle and ring as few other permanent big bands can.

The booklet features outstanding photos of Bill Evans in Copenhagen in 1964 and '66 by photographer Jan Persson, and notes by Jim McNeely.

The Danish Radio Jazz Orchestra:

Jim McNeely (Chief conductor); Anders Gustafsson, Benny Rosenfeld, Thomas Kjærgaard, Henrik Bolberg Pedersen, Thomas Fryland (tp); Vincent Nilsson, Steen Hansen, Peter Jensen, Alf Vestergaard, Axel Windfeld (tb); Michael Hove, Nicolai Schultz, Tomas Franck, Uffe Markussen, Flemming Madsen (reeds); Nikolaj Bentzon (p); Anders Chico Lindvall (g); Thomas Ovesen (b), Søren Frost (dm); Ethan Weisgard (perc). Jim McNeely plays piano on *Turn Out the Stars*.

Markussen, not Franck

Jim McNeely's memory played a small trick on him when writing his notes: Tomas Franck did NOT play the solo in Re:Person I Knew. The solo was played on the bass clarinet by Uffe Markussen.

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