

Stan Getz Rises For Final Bow

Three months before his death on June 6, 1991, weak and ailing from liver cancer, saxophonist Stan Getz and pianist Kenny Barron embarked on a four-night stint at Copenhagen's Café Montmartre. Fourteen pieces from these concerts were released as *People Time* in 1992. On ***People Time: The Complete Recordings* (Sunnyside 3084; 42:58/55:43/50:48/77:39/69:05/54:02/66:29 ★★★½)** Getz introduces the 48 songs the duo is about to play as "the good, the bad and the in-between." Indeed, there is no denying that Getz is not the musician he once was; his tone is more metallic and his breathing is sometimes shallow. His musical imagination sometimes leads him places he can't escape. That stated, there is much heroic, heart-rending playing here, and Barron is a deep well of resourcefulness who constantly rises to take control when Getz falters.

Listeners will invariably differ about the best set here, but if you could set the dial on your time machine for one hour at the Montmartre you'd do well to choose the late set on March 4. One hint of how it went is its length: eight minutes longer than its closest rival. Although Getz clearly tires near the end of his opening solo on "Stablemates"—one of seven pieces he would play on each of the first three nights (the fourth night was cut short by Getz's illness)—he rallies during Barron's exuberant two-handed runs. That spirit of rejuvenation, and the interplay between the two, is a common thread.

Following "Stablemates" comes one of the stand's highlights, a beautifully contemplative "I Remember Clifford" with a remarkably well-integrated sax and piano head. Getz runs on automatic pilot a bit on "Like Someone In Love" and falters on Charlie Haden's "First Song," but it's failure that breaks your heart. Raw and lonesome sounding, Getz's opening cues a compelling response from Barron, full of icy notes and lingering melancholy. Nothing prepares you for the electricity that crackles throughout "The Surrey With A Fringe On Top," which the duo tackled four times in Copenhagen. Barely touching on the melody, Getz sounds completely unfettered and at one with his horn, handing off to a long, up-tempo romp by Barron. A finely textured "Yours And Mine" closes the evening.

The joy of a collection like this, of course, is that you can cherry pick the very best, which would include a fast, assured "Night And Day" from Disc 3, a virtuosic "You Stepped Out Of A Dream" from Disc 5—the liveliest set of all, despite Getz's reed problems—and the one-two punch of "Hush-A-Bye" and "I'm Okay" from Disc 7.

Of course, there is no escaping the irony of that latter song, composed by Eddie Del Barrio, who had played synthesizer on Getz's *Apasionado*. Tender and wistful in its first appearance on opening night, the song gets



Kenny Barron and Stan Getz: compelling and resourceful

the better of Getz on March 4. He strives for breathy tenderness, but winds up sounding strident. Getz puts the song away until the final night, and then turns it into a thing of naked beauty.

The low point is reached on the sole take of "Bouncing With Bud." So flawed was Getz's playing that the piece was edited to cover a gaffe, yet again Barron rides to the rescue with a blazing solo. The breadth of the pianist's contributions over these seven sets is exceptional—ranging from the stride-influenced showcase on "(There Is No) Greater Love" on March 3 to the harmonically advanced playing on the closing night's "Hush-A-Bye." Given the timing, Getz is the obvious focus of this box, but Barron is the clear winner of the MVP award.

There is no question that Getz went down swinging. While he sometimes relied on abrupt shifts in dynamics to cover his diminished skills, he could still tear your heart with a few notes, and although his breathy phrases occasionally turned wheezy, he could still rip into an arpeggio or throw off a clever, crisply articulated quote. **DB**

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Ike Sturm *Jazz Mass*

(SELF RELEASED)

★★★★½

Bassist and composer Ike Sturm's *Jazz Mass* is an excellent work that melds jazz and the mass genre together extremely well, a feat I've not heard before. New York City's Saint Peter's Church commissioned Sturm to write *Jazz Mass* as a tribute to Pastor Dale Lind for his 40 years of service there. *Jazz Mass*, which exudes serenity, peacefulness and a still calmness, employs a choir, string orchestra, a top-notch rhythm section and the stellar front-line of saxophonists Donny McCaslin and Loren Stillman and trumpeter Ingrid Jensen. Sturm took four ordinaries from the Catholic Mass ("Kyrie," "Gloria," "Sanctus," "Agnus Dei") and added the hymns "Just As I Am" and "Shine." He also set the Lord's Prayer to music, included two shorter improvised instrumental solos from himself and guitarist Ryan Ferreira, and contributed the longer composition "Offertory: Stillness."

The writing is similar to Maria Schneider's recent work: implied time that's felt rather than directly heard, an emphasis on texture and color, several exposed parts and plenty of room for soloists to stretch out. Sturm uses the choir and strings strategically, often to increase emotional intensity, especially near the climax of one of the horns' several solos or to support solo vocalist Misty Ann Sturm's quiet, bell-like soprano. The strings are barely beneath her at the beginning of the "Sanctus," and as they build the choir enters to give full effect to the text's final two lines: "Hosanna in the highest/Blessed is he who comes in His name: Lord." The choral writing is rarely melismatic or polyphonic, making it easy to hear the mostly English text, although it betrays Sturm's breaking of some of the basic rules of vocal writing.

—Chris Robinson

Jazz Mass: Kyrie; Gloria; Interlude; Hymn: Just As I Am; Offertory: Stillness; Sanctus; Thanksgiving; Our Father; Agnus Dei; Hymn: Shine, (57:12)

Personnel: Ike Sturm, composition, bass; Misty Ann Sturm, voice; Loren Stillman, alto saxophone; Donny McCaslin, tenor saxophone; Ingrid Jensen, trumpet, flugelhorn; Adam Benjamin, piano, rhodes; Ryan Ferreira, guitar; Ted Poor, drums; choir; string orchestra.

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