



Moonbeams: BILL EVANS Trio

BILL EVANS, piano; CHUCK ISBAZEK, bass; PAUL MOTIAN, drums

SIDE 1

1. *For Person I Know* (3:42) (Bill Evans)
2. *Felix (Fox and Mousketeers)* (3:57) (Kurtis Post Evans)
3. *I Fall in Love too Easily* (2:39) (Steve Ladd)
4. *Skipsway to the Stars* (4:08) (Frank Mahoney/Sperduto)

SIDE 2

1. *If You Could See Me Now* (4:24) (Tadd Dameron)
2. *It Might as Well Be Spring* (6:01) (Kathryn & Remondino)
3. *In Love in Vain* (4:56) (Gene Ashby)
4. *Very Early* (3:04) (Bill Evans)

This album represents two fronts for Bill Evans. It is the first recording of the trio he has led since Chuck Israels replaced the late Scott La Paro at the beginning of 1962, and it is his first all-labeled collection.

There are circumstances unusual to produce some interesting results. It is inevitable that a trio with an Evans—Isbazi, complete, and right-hand—would result in a synthesis with a change in personnel. La Paro was an extremely rarely dominant bassist in a way that Chuck Israels does not attempt to be. Israels, who has played for such diverse contemporary pianists as Bill Foyell, Cecil Taylor, Don Friedman and George Russell, tends to substitute himself for the pianist, whereas La Paro and Evans often played what amounted to duets. The result of this change is a surprising one.

In 1957, with Evans as the only pianist better known for such things as his remarkable solo on George Russell's *Old Alone* than for his own LPs, Martin Williams wrote that "there is an easy but fearful tension in the playing of Evans the soloist that Evans the leader is not always in touch with." That was, I think, an accurate remark then, and remained so until the death of La Paro forced Evans to dominate his own group.

It is not surprising that Evans' relationship with La Paro at that time, there was a strange dichotomy in Evans' work. The first 10 or so minutes of the first and the middle fifth was replaced, on his own recordings, by a wistful impressionism that, covering and obscuring in a new and as seemed to be coming from an altogether different pianist than the one who had been functioning as a soloist. Eventually, the reputation as a player of ballads began to overtake the former one.

It would be good news at any time to learn that Evans had recorded a album of ballads, because he is one of the most sensitive interpreters of these ball musical legends in our time. For here one finds (on *Saturday on the Stars*, for example) that the muscular force that could be interpreted as a sedulous or notable has now become an integral part of his ballad playing, giving him the softness and strength of a ball player. Whether or not it is a result due to Israels' presence, it is, of course, a matter of sheer speculation, but the new quality is there, and it makes Evans a more in-



person pianist than he has ever been before. Emotions and impressions which once seemed almost too delicate and restrained to be expressed by him are now firmly and securely stated.

One thing Evans has always done superbly in these musicals, and he has done this again here, is the right piano played, only two have such currency among jazz musicians. One of these, of course, is Felix (fox and Mousketeers). The other comes from within jazz and is one of the loveliest ballads ever to be so. Tadd Dameron's *If You Could See Me Now*. Probably Evans was moved to include this piece which he recorded in 1957 before these present sessions as a tribute to the Tadd Dameron Orchestra on Columbia. In addition, there is a change in Evans in the role of vocal accompanist. *Saturday in the Stars* and *It Might as Well Be Spring* are both among the most favorable standards we have, but neither has been widely recognized as a jazz vehicle. *I Fall in Love too Easily* is, unfortunately, considerably less well-known, and *In Love in Vain* is one of the strangest of Evans' arrangements, with some bits (especially the ballad and concluding songs) that one assumed everyone had unconsciously forgotten.

There are also two Evans originals. The title of *For Person I Know* is an enigmatic referring to the producer of these sessions, and contains an allusion to some "Dance" for "Knox" in order to make it come out right. The piece itself, which has no such problems in coming out right, is a model one. In that sense, it might be said that Evans' improvisation abilities have now become an integral part of his ballad playing, giving him the softness and strength of a ball player. Whether or not it is a result due to Israels' presence, it is, of course, a matter of sheer speculation, but the new quality is there, and it makes Evans a more in-

Evans is unique both as a composer and player of ballads, and proves it again, unambiguously, with *Very Early*. Unlike many musicians, he is not at all content to retreat on the possibility for delivery.

These records have contained in addition, if *It Might as Well Be Spring*, which is in itself a tribute to his skill, for he is more fit than most of these tracks, that utilizing the great subtlety of the other two pianists in great unimpeded. This Evans is quiet and subtle, while having found a new force in his playing, provides the unusual combination of quietude that makes his often completely inaudible ballads the surface of one of the most highly enjoyable piano ballad sets in a very long time.

—JAC COOPER/CRG

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