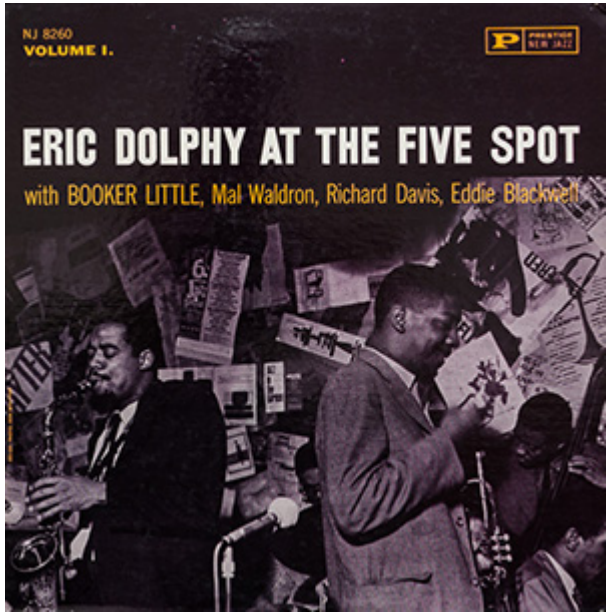
NJ 8260
VOLUME I.
ERIC DOLPHY AT THE FIVE SPOT
with BOOKER LITTLE, Mal Waldron, Richard Davis, Eddie Blackwell

PRESTIGE
STEREO
ERIC DOLPHY AT THE FIVE SPOT, VOL. 1
ERIC DOLPHY
PRST 7611
SIDE 1
1. FIRE WALTZ
Waldron-Tru-Sound Recording Corp.-ASCAP 13:30
(Tru-Sound Music Division)
2. BEE VAMP
Little 13:00
PRESTIGE RECORDS INC., 203 S. WASHINGTON AVE., BERGENFIELD, N. J.

PRESTIGE NEW JAZZ 8260

ERIC DOLPHY AT THE FIVE SPOT

8260

ERIC DOLPHY, alto saxophone and bass clarinet
BOOKER LITTLE, trumpet
MAL WALDRON, piano
RICHARD DAVIS, bass
ED BLACKWELL, drums

SIDE A

1. FIRE WALTZ
2. BEE VAMP

SIDE B

1. THE PROPHET

When the quintet whose music appears here played at the Five Spot in the summer of 1961, many people were pleased, not by the music alone, but by the idea. There has been a new music coming for years now, and a group such as this was one of the most definitive announcements that such a music was now definitely **here**, for better or worse. It was also interesting, and a good sign, that the members of the quintet had chosen to make their group a cooperative one, which seemed to signify that the music itself would be more important than any star matrix would for creation.

In format, it was a standard quintet of the kind that the bop era had made traditional—saxophone, trumpet, and three rhythm—but the music hinted at developments going far beyond that concept.

To begin with, there is Eric Dolphy, who is enough in himself to make the word "standard" inapplicable to any unit he works in. A master of all the reed instruments, although he only employs alto saxophone and bass clarinet here, he is one of the most and at times the most challenging intense players in contemporary music. At the time of this recording, although he had just won the **Down Beat International Critics Poll** as New Star Alto Saxophonist, the Five Spot engagement represented the first regular work he had had since leaving Charles Mingus several months before. Since that time, he has been the center of considerable controversy as a member of the group led by John Coltrane.

Trumpeter Booker Little died less than three months after this recording was made, on October 5th, 1961. Some of the things he said to Robert Levin in a **Metronome** interview are pertinent to his work here. "In my own work," he said, "I'm particularly interested in the possibilities of dissonance. If it's a consonant sound it's going to sound smaller. The more dissonance, the bigger the sound. It sounds the more heavy, in fact, you can't always tell how many there are. And your chordings can be more varied. Dissonance is a tool to achieve these things." Another part of the interview elaborated on his concept of dissonance. . . . I can't think in terms of wrong notes, in fact I don't hear any notes as being wrong. It's a matter of knowing how to integrate the notes and, if you must, how to resolve them. Because if you know that this note in that note is wrong I think you're stuck. I don't understand anything about music. Forgetting about any conventionality—technically and musically—I don't think anyone would deny that more emotion can be expressed by the expressed outside of the conventional way of playing which consists of whole steps and half steps. There's more emotion that can be expressed by the notes that are played that." His friend Ran Blake wrote of him that "Booker heard more than most because he had never blocks than most. In his living, he was neither paralyzed nor hesitant by discoveries he also knew that nothing is fully convincent. And his music, as has been true of all the women whose work both, was himself. Both were big, and their possibilities had only begun to be realized."

With two such men in the front line, a stabilizing element was required to keep the music going in understandable patterns. This was the function of pianist Mal Waldron, and he filled his role to perfection. Waldron has had much experience of exactly this sort of thing, having been the pianist for Charles Mingus for a long period of time. To my mind, he is one of the most consistently excellent of contemporary pianists, and, unfortunately, one whose excellence is too often taken for granted. This album contains brilliant examples of Waldron at his best: spinning out a series of notes to their fullest conclusions, without ever losing the feeling of a powerful pulse present at all times. Therefore, he was more committed to the music than Waldron, has who play it with more skill and dedication, and few so overdue in their acceptance.

Bassist Richard Davis first came to prominence working with pianists Ahmad Jamal and Don Shirley, neither of which jobs necessarily prepared him for work in the present group. He also spent quite a bit of time working for Sarah Vaughan. He is a thoroughly grounded classical technician, and may be the only bassist in Leonard Feather's **Encyclopedia of Jazz** to list the great Sergei Koussevitsky as his favorite. Davis is one of several players who are currently making the expanding role of the bass the most interesting phenomenon on the current jazz scene.

Drummer Ed Blackwell is familiar with the farthest reaches of the new jazz, having come to prominence as a member of the Ornette Coleman Quartet, and Coleman has said of him that he has "one of the most musical ears of playing rhythm of anyone I have heard."

In some sense, an unusual group to be playing together, but in the more important sense, an excellent one. The atmosphere in which the recordings were made (the present album is the first of a series which will eventually be released, since the music was of an unusually high quality that night, and there was more usable material than is customary in such circumstances) was a cross between a regular evening at a club and a private party. Friends and admirers of members of the group were invited to come down and participate that night, who in his capacity as a B & H man had recorded both Eric and Booker, was there, as was his father and had little difficulty in getting a good sound. Eric's striking face and beard as far as with his music was there to see if Eric would pose. Prestige Art Director Ron Schiffman, whose photograph adorns this album cover, risked death from those he blinded with his flashbulbs while attempting to get the shot. But out of the applause and shouts of approval you will hear come from them. The room was filled with people who came because of the reputation of the group's players, without any knowledge of a recording. And, I should imagine, almost were there because the Five Spot is still the most congenial atmosphere in New York in which to listen to jazz. Various aspects of the "new thing" have started there, as far as New York is concerned, with the appearances of such groups as those led by Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman, and George Russell, and so it is fitting that this recording should have been made there.

It is also fitting, since this was a cooperative group, that each of the major soloists contributed one of the three compositions heard. **Fire Waltz**, by Mal Waldron (Dolphy is an alto artists the growing concept of playing phrases with rhythms other than the basic 4/4. Booker Little's **Bee Vamp** (Dolphy plays bass clarinet on this one) is a blues, contrasted with another aspect of the concept, the chordal suspension. The entire second side of the album is taken up by a composition of Dolphy's the piece which, **The Prophet**, is a close to the ballad form, and is for a friend of Eric's, the painter Richard Jennings, called Prophet, who painted the covers for Eric's first two Prestige New Jazz LPs (**Outward Bound**, 8234, and **Out There**, 8252).

The individual moments of excellence on this LP are too many to enumerate, and are even more startling considering the improvisation circumstances under which they were recorded, allowing no chance to do anything over. But that, of course, is what jazz at its best is supposed to be. It can continue in that mode, as its surrounding reaches, as long as there are musicians like this to play it.

Notes: Joe Goldberg
Supervision: Esmond Edwards
Recording: Rudy Van Gelder
Recorded July 16, 1961

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