

toward an expansive, funk-infused style, sometimes playing a Fender Rhodes electric keyboard. Also during the '70s, Jamal moved to the 20th Century label and continued to release a steady stream of albums that attracted both hardcore jazz and crossover audiences. Of his '70s albums, both *Genetic Walk* (1975) and *Intervals* (1979) made the R&B charts.

Night Song The '80s continued to be a productive time for Jamal, who kicked the decade off with such albums as *Night Song* on Motown (1980) and *Live in Concert Featuring Gary Burton* (1981). After signing with Atlantic, Jamal released several well-received albums that found him returning to his classic, acoustic small group sound including *Digital Works* (1985), *Live at the Montreal Jazz Festival 1985* (1985), *Rossiter Road* (1986), *Crystal* (1987), and *Pittsburgh* (1989).

Chicago Revisited: Live at Joel Segal's Jazz Showcase The '90s also saw a resurgence in interest and acclaim for Jamal, who was awarded the American Jazz Master Fellowship by the National Endowment for the Arts in 1994. Though he never stopped interpreting standards, Jamal utilized his own compositions more and more as the decades passed.

During this period, he delivered such albums as *Chicago Revisited: Live at Joel Segal's Jazz Showcase* on Telarc (1992), *Live in Paris '92* on Verve (1993), *I Remember Duke, Hoagy & Strayhorn* on Telarc (1994), as well as a handful of superb releases for Birdology including *The Essence, Pt. 1* (1995), *Big Byrd: The Essence, Pt. 2* (1995), and *Nature: The Essence, Pt. 3* (1997).

Olympia 2000 In 2000, Jamal celebrated his 70th birthday with the concert album *L'Olympia 2000* (released in October of the following year), which featured saxophonist George Coleman. He followed up with *In Search of Momentum* (2003), *After Fajr* (2005), *It's Magic* (2008), *A Quiet Time* (2010), and *Blue Moon: The New York Session/The Paris Concert* (2012). In 2013, Jamal released the album *Saturday Morning: La Buissonne Studio Sessions*, featuring bassist Reginald Veal and drummer Herlin Riley. Also in 2013, Jamal opened Lincoln Center's concert season by performing live with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. A year later, he delivered the concert album *Live at the Olympia, June 27, 2012: The Music and the Film of the Complete Concert*, which featured Yusef Lateef. In 2017, Jamal delivered the small group session *Marseille*, which included contributions from French rapper Abd Al Malik and vocalist Mina Agossi.

AHMAD JAMAL at the BLACKHAWK



One of the most individualistic pianists, composers, and arrangers of his generation, Ahmad Jamal's disciplined technique and minimalist style had a huge impact on trumpeter Miles Davis, and Jamal is often cited as contributing to the development of cool jazz throughout the 1950s. Though Jamal was a highly technically proficient player, well-versed in the gymnastic idioms of swing and bebop, he chose to play in a more pared down and nuanced style. Which is to say that while he played with the skill of a virtuoso, it was often what he chose not to play that marked him as an innovator. Influenced by such pianists as Errol Garner, Art Tatum, and Nat King Cole, as well as big-band and orchestral music, Jamal developed his own boundary-pushing approach to modern jazz that incorporated an abundance of space, an adept use of tension and release, unexpected rhythmic phrasing and dynamics, and a highly melodic, compositional style.

Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on July 2, 1930, Jamal was a child prodigy and began playing piano at age 3, discovered by his uncle. By the time he was 7 years old, Jamal was studying privately with Mary Cardwell Dawson, the founder of the National Negro Opera Company. An accomplished musician by his teens, Jamal performed regularly in the local jazz scene and in 1949 toured with George Hudson's Orchestra. After leaving Hudson, he joined swing violinist Joe Kennedy's group the Four Strings, with whom he stayed until Kennedy's departure around 1950.

Chamber Music of the New Jazz After leaving the Four Strings, Jamal relocated to Chicago, where he formed his own group, the Three Strings with bassist Eddie Calhoun and guitarist Ray Crawford. The precursor to the later Ahmad Jamal Trio, the Three Strings would, at different times, include bassists Richard Davis and Israel Crosby. During a stint in New York City, the Three Strings caught the ear of legendary Columbia record exec and talent scout John Hammond who signed the group to the Columbia subsidiary OKeh in 1951. During this time, Jamal released several influential albums including Ahmad Jamal Trio Plays (also known as Chamber Music of the New Jazz) on Parrot (1955), The Ahmad Jamal Trio on Epic (1955), and Count 'Em 88 on Argo (1956). Some of the landmark songs recorded during these sessions included "Ahmad's Blues" and "Pavanne," both of which had a profound impact on Miles Davis, who later echoed the spare, bluesy quality of

Jamal's playing on his own recordings.

At the Pershing: But Not for Me In 1958, Jamal took up a residency in the lounge of the Pershing Hotel in Chicago. Working with bassist Crosby and drummer Vernell Fournier, Jamal recorded the seminal live album, Ahmad Jamal at the Pershing: But Not for Me. Comprised primarily of jazz standards, including his definitive version of the buoyant Latin number "Poinciana," the album showcased Jamal's minimalist phrasing and unique approach to small group jazz, emphasizing varied dynamics and nuanced shading as opposed to the high energy freneticism commonly associated with jazz of the '40s and '50s.

Though somewhat misunderstood by critics at the time who did not fully appreciate the inventive qualities of Jamal's playing, the album proved a commercial success and remained on the Billboard album charts for over two years -- a rarefied achievement for a jazz musician of any generation.

Jamal at the Penthouse The smash success of Ahmad Jamal at the Pershing: But Not for Me raised the musician's profile and allowed him to open his own club and restaurant, The Alhambra, in Chicago in 1959. During this time, Jamal released several albums on the Argo label including Ahmad Jamal Trio, Vol. 4 (1958), Ahmad Jamal at the Penthouse (1960), Happy Moods (1960), Ahmad Jamal's Alhambra (1961), and All of You (1961). Unfortunately, The Alhambra closed in 1961. The following year, Jamal disbanded his trio, moved to New York City and took a two year hiatus from the music industry. Ahmad Jamal at the Top: Poinciana Revisited In 1964, Jamal returned to performing and recording. Working with a new version of his trio that included bassist Jamil Nasser and drummer Frank Gant, with whom he would work until 1972, Jamal recorded several more albums for Argo (later renamed Cadet) including Naked City Theme (1964), The Roar of the Greasepaint (1965), and Extensions (1965), Rhapsody (1966), Heat Wave (1966), Cry Young (1967), and The Bright, the Blue and the Beautiful (1968). Also in 1968, Jamal made his Impulse Records debut with the live album Ahmad Jamal at the Top: Poinciana Revisited. This was followed by several more Impulse releases including The Awakening (1970), Freeflight (1971), and Outertimeinnerspace (1972), both of which culled tracks from his appearance at the Montreux Jazz Festival in 1971. These albums found Jamal moving

AHMAD JAMAL at the BLACKHAWK

Ahmad Jamal - At The Blackhawk

1 I'll Take Romance / My Funny Valentine 6:12

2 Like Someone In Love 5:15

3 Falling In Love With Love 4:20

4 The Best Thing For You 4:35

5 April In Paris 6:15

6 Second Time Around 4:13

7 We Live In Two Different Worlds 5:08

8 Night Mist Blues 7:05

Total Time: 43:03

Piano – Ahmad Jamal Bass – Israel Crosby
Drums – Vernell Fournier Piano – Ahmad Jamal
Supervised By – Paul Gayten

Recorded Live by Argo Records at the Blackhawk in San Francisco 1961



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