



THE MODERN JAZZ QUARTET

Facts About this Recording

Recorded August 22, 1959 & January 15, 1960

transferred From a Atlantic Records 4-track Tape

PYRAMID

The Modern Jazz Quartet was a jazz combo established in 1952 that played a style of jazz influenced by classical music, cool jazz, blues and bebop. The band performed over a forty-year span with only one personnel change. Under John Lewis's leadership they carved their own niche by specializing in elegant, restrained music that used sophisticated counterpoint yet nonetheless retained a strong blues feel. John Lewis firmly believed that J.S. Bach and the blues were compatible, combining classical form with jazz improvisation and polyphony. The band was also noted for its ability to play alongside a variety of other groups. For the majority of their career the group comprised John Lewis (piano and musical director), Milt Jackson (vibraphone), Percy Heath (double bass) and Connie Kay (drums). Initially active into the 1970s, until Jackson quit due to creative disagreement and frustration with their busy touring schedule, the MJQ reformed intermittently into the 1990s.

In 1946, John Lewis (piano), Milt Jackson (vibraphone), Ray Brown (bass) and Kenny Clarke (drums), members of Dizzy Gillespie's big band, formed a quartet as a side project. By 1951, the combo were recording as the Milt Jackson Quartet. In 1952, Percy Heath replaced Brown on bass and in late 1952 they changed the name to Modern Jazz Quartet. In 1955, the final switch to the band's lineup occurred as Connie Kay (drums) replaced Clarke.

In their middle years the group often played with classical musicians, but their repertoire consisted mainly of bebop and swing era standards. From 1952 to 1955 the group recorded for Prestige and released two of their most famous compositions, "Django" (a tribute to the Belgian guitarist Django Reinhardt) and "Bags' Groove" ("Bags" being Jackson's nickname). In the late 1950s they provided soundtrack music for Roger Vadim's film *Sait-on Jamais* (released in America as *No Sun in Venice* and in the UK as *One Never Knows*) and subsequently recorded this music. From 1956 to 1974 they recorded for

Atlantic Records, with occasional projects with other record labels such as Apple.[5] In 1974 Jackson departed from the group and they ceased to play until the early 1980s when they began reuniting periodically.[5] The MJQ released their final recording in 1993. When Kay died in November 1994 the group stopped reuniting; five years later in October 1999 Milt Jackson died, followed by John Lewis in March 2001 and Percy Heath in April 2005.

The paradox of the MJQ's music-making was that each individual member could improvise with an exciting vibrancy while maintaining the precision and collectedness of a classical group. They typified cool jazz through John Lewis' composition skills, but also exemplify bop with Milt Jackson's virtuosic improvisation. As musical director, John Lewis envisioned a style that fused composition and improvisation. Lewis wrote both "fugue-like" classically influenced pieces as well as modern jazz standards such as "Django". The Modern Jazz Quartet played in a variety of styles, but generally played a combination of cool jazz and bop. Milt Jackson brought a strong bebop influence to the group with his virtuosic improvisation and was the first to play vibraphone in a bop style. Percy Heath too brought a hard-bop influence to the group having played with J.J. Johnson, Art Blakey, Thelonious Monk and Clifford Brown. The MJQ's style was characterized by flexibility; they played alongside orchestras and brass bands, covered a Beatles tune and performed at prestigious venues.

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PYRAMID

1. Vendome 2:30
2. Pyramid 10:46
3. It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing) 5:02
4. Django 5:23
5. How High the Moon 6:15
6. Romaine

Please Note: In the interest of preserving the superb sound quality of these historic recordings, they have been preserved in their original, pristine state for maximum fidelity. Transferred from commercially released, analog reel-to-reel tapes (some of which are more than 50 years old), the recordings themselves can be subject to certain "artifacts" which are an inseparable part of the original analog recording process, such as tape "hiss" or other defects, and these may be audible on certain music tracks. Because your CD or DVD-A was individually "burned" in order to realize superior sound quality to stamped, mass-produced versions, microscopic cosmetic blemishes may be visible. Please regard these tiny marks as evidence of the "human touch" in the care and individual attention that each and every HDTT disc receives during its very demanding manufacturing process.



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