



BILL EVANS

Everybody digs Bill Evans Riverside 12-291.

by Martin Williams

Bill Evans, piano; accompanied on tracks 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8 by Sam Jones, bass, and Philly Joe Jones, drums.

Minority; Young and Foolish; Lucky to Be Me; Night and Day; Epilogue; Tenderly; Peace Piece; What Is There to Say; Oleo; Epilogue.

Probably Bill Evans would be an important jazzman if only because he functions so well in the East in the midst of all the funky hollering, and shows that there are other ways to convey emotion and other emotions to convey—indeed, by implication he reminds us that real hollering may convey emotion, but that it isn't art. But he is important for a lot of reasons that go beyond the delight of his touch and the message of feeling that his touch alone might convey.

Whatever Evans has learned from Lennie Tristano, he has one capacity that Tristano does not, a really exceptional, relaxed, rhythmic imagination and flexibility, and with it he has absorbed and even supplemented the rhythmic basis of bebop.

All that technique, and every note of it, function as one: rhythmically, harmonically, and linearly; a man might earn the title of artist for having done less.

And Evans would be an important jazzman at the moment if only because he is a leading member of the movement which moves emphasis away from the thick and rapid chord-shiftings

of bop. And within it, Evans uses those "advanced" intervals of his and his scales to improvise continuous and original melodies.

Since I'm obviously calling this an LP by an important musician, I hasten to add a few things. It seems to me that Evans' ad lib performances like "Lucky to Be Me" may be a mistake: they show only his technique and touch, and they may sustain a mood, but we know of those things anyway and know of them without the languidness these excursions constantly risk. And a man with Evans' rhythmic capacity should use them. "Peace Piece" on the other hand is a remarkable ostinato tour de force, an improvisation as good as some of the carefully wrought French impressionistic compositions which in part inspired it. Does it swing? The answer is, of course, that rhythmically only the jazz pianist named Bill Evans could have played it.

Quite a record. But there is something missing on even the best tracks: "Minority," "Tenderly," [and] "Oleo." The resources and the possibilities of his playing are here, but there is a kind of relaxed variety with emotional and melodic concentration in some of his other recordings that one misses here. It is present in his work on "Cross Section—Saxes" (*Decca* DL 9029), is even on a gimmick record like "Guys and Dolls Like Vibes" with Eddie Costa (*Coral* CRL 57230) and of course in his excellent "All About Rosie" solo (*Columbia* WL 127). Obviously, a conclusion is at hand: there is an easy but forceful terseness in the playing of Evans the sideman that Evans the leader is not always in touch with.

[Jazz Rev2.9]