



The J.J. Johnson Quintet – J.J. In Person
Columbia

The word “deception” as described in the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary is “the act of causing someone to accept as true or valid what is false or invalid”. I mention this definition because it’s significant to begin the month of February with a live album that isn’t. J.J. In Person (CL 1161) by The J.J. Johnson Quintet is actually a studio recording masquerading as a live album with over-dubbed applause and fake bandstand announcements. That said, it’s not a bad album at all, quite the contrary actually. The choice of classic and contemporary tunes is exemplary, and the musicians assembled for this date are four of the best in the business; Nathaniel “Nat” Adderley on cornet; Tommy Flanagan on piano; Wilbur “Doc” Little on double bass and Albert “Tootie” Heath on drums. My copy used in this report is the original Mono Deep Groove LP and trombonist J.J. Johnson gives the introductions for all seven tunes.

The album begins with a fast-paced rendition of Miles Davis’ 1953 jazz standard Tune-Up opening with a brief introduction by Tommy before the quintet comes together to run through the melody. J.J. takes off first with a high-spirited opening statement, then Nat swings just as hard on the second reading. Tommy’s fingers fly swiftly over the keys next, then Heath wraps everything up in a heated exchange with Johnson and Adderley into the reprise, ending and introductions of the band and next tune. Laura by David Raskin is the title tune of the 1944 film with Johnny Mercer adding the lyrics after the film made the song a huge hit. A favorite of musicians and vocalists since its creation, Laura has been recorded more than four hundred times. This is a quartet feature for Johnson who takes the rhythm section through the midtempo melody completely carefree. J.J. leads off, applying a refreshing airiness to several swinging verses fueled by the trio’s supplement. Tommy follows with a gorgeous account of rhythmic vitality on a brief chorus preceding the trombone’s return for the closing coda.

The quintet returns to full voice on Richard Carpenter’s jazz classic, Walkin’ with everyone collectively cooking on the vivacious opening melody. J.J. states his thoughts economically but effectively on the lead solo. Nat offers up some brassy fire on a strikingly insightful performance next. Tommy handles the finale with a breathtaking flourish ahead of the ensemble’s climax. The first side ends vigorously on Cole Porter’s 1929 classic, What Is This Thing Called Love? An exhilarating opening solo by Flanagan segues into an effervescent theme treatment by the quintet featuring some brief comments by “Tootie”. Adderley takes over for a lively, vivacious reading, then Johnson gives a joyously unrestrained performance. Little and Heath share a brief closing statement preceding the firm beat the song ends on. The music of Thelonious Monk opens Side Two with Misterioso; the song was written in 1958, serving as a title tune of the Riverside album Monk released that year, and again as the title song for a 1965 Columbia LP he recorded while on tour. Its definition means mysterious in Italian and is given a bluesy midtempo treatment after the opening chorus. Nat and J.J. are the featured soloists and the cornetist establishes a nice momentum in a relaxed mood. The leader does a happy romp with an exceptionally agile interpretation, complementing the group’s smooth sound throughout this Monk original.

My Old Flame was written in 1934 by Arthur Johnston and Sam Coslow and featured in the film that year, Belle of The Nineties. This old evergreen is the second quartet tune featuring J.J. as the song’s only soloist. The trombonist starts the slow-tempo standard in excellent voice with a rich, warm tone producing an intimately tender statement of subtlety that’s absolutely beautiful. The album concludes with the 1945 blues by Charlie Parker, Now’s The Time, beginning with a collective medium beat on the melody that’s an irresistible toe-tapper. J.J. cruises at a moderate speed, taking the lead solo for a leisurely saunter. Nat preaches passionate phrases that are pitch-perfect on the second performance. Tommy follows with an expertly crafted interpretation of delightful pleasure. Wilbert and “Tootie” exchange one short verse each with the front line, ending the album on an upbeat note. The sound quality on this Mono LP is stupendous because of the amazing acoustics within the Columbia 30th Street Studio. Many of the label’s top jazz musicians and vocalists, Dave Brubeck, Buck Clayton, Miles Davis, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, Billie Holiday, Charles Mingus, Sarah Vaughan, and others used the space to create some of the greatest albums ever recorded.

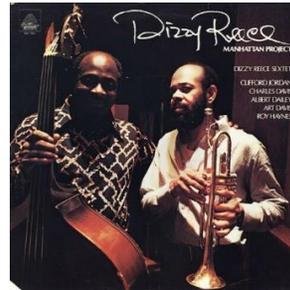


This album was produced by George Avakian who in addition to his work on Columbia LPs, also produced albums on Decca Records, RCA Records, Warner Bros. Records, and World Pacific Records. The original recording engineer was Frank Laico who worked at both the Columbia 30th Street Studio and CBS Studios in New York City and was also the man behind the dials on albums for Atlantic, Cadence, Colpix, Dot Records, Epic, Reprise, United Artists Records and Verve Records to name of few. For the life of me, I can't think of any reason why Columbia felt they needed to label this record a live album when it clearly wasn't. Anyway, that's a mystery for another day. As I stated at the beginning of this report, J.J. In Person is actually a very good and enjoyable album. It's also a title I recommend that's worthy of an audition for a spot in any jazz library, especially if you're a fan of J.J. Johnson. There was only the one issue of this album in Mono, the Stereo release (CS 8009) hit the stores a year later in 1959. To hear the album as it was originally recorded, it can be found on the 1996 Mosaic Records eleven LP box set, The Complete Columbia J.J. Johnson Small Group Sessions!

George Avakian, Frank Laico, Misterioso (Riverside RLP 12-279/RLP 1133), (Columbia CL 2416/CS 9216); The Complete Columbia J.J. Johnson Small Group Sessions (Mosaic Records MQ11-169) – Source: Discogs.com

Laura, My Old Flame – Source: JazzStandards.com

Misterioso, Now's The Time, Tune-Up, Walkin', What Is This Thing Called Love? – Source: Wikipedia.org



Dizzy Reece Sextet – Manhattan Project
Bee Hive Records

Submitted for your consideration now is an album by trumpet player Dizzy Reece. Manhattan Project (Bee Hive Records BH 7001) is the only album he recorded for the Evanston, Illinois label. Reece was born in Kingston Jamaica and attended the Alpha Boys School where he began playing the baritone sax before switching to the trumpet at the age of fourteen. It's also during this time where he got his nickname Dizzy, which has nothing to do with Dizzy Gillespie. He became a professional musician by the age of sixteen and has played with some of the greatest jazz musicians in the United States, England, and France. On this date, he performs with an outstanding quintet; Charles Davis, and Clifford Jordan on tenor sax; Albert Dailey on piano; Art Davis on bass and Roy Haynes on drums. My copy used in this report is the 1978 Stereo album, the only release on LP.

Con Man, the first of three tunes from Reece's pen starts Side One with a brief trio introduction that segues into the ensemble's speedy theme. Dizzy begins a lengthy performance that swings with limitless energy convincingly. Clifford and Charles take the reins next for two incendiary solos of intense heat. Albert maintains the high-voltage current on the next reading with his fingers providing plenty of electricity. Roy adds a brisk footnote that glows brightly preceding the sextet's lively closing chorus. Dizzy's Manhattan Walk takes the sextet on an adventurous evening stroll through the city with the group speaking in unison on the modal melody led by the front line. Reece goes first, haunting the streets like a restless spirit but with a hypnotic emotion that's irresistibly seductive. Jordan gets the next turn, revealing his abundant lyricism and Dailey follows exhibiting formidable creativity preceding the ensemble continuing their walk down the street into the fadeout. The first side closes with the third Reece tune; Yule on The Hudson flies from the opening notes of the trio's introduction with an



astounding workout by Roy into the ensemble's high-powered theme treatment. Dizzy takes his trumpet for a thrilling ride on the first solo; Clifford illuminates the next interpretation with some splendid work. Charles takes over for a spirited presentation possessing equal amounts of speed and energy. Albert continues with an incisively, infectious exploration that takes hold of you and doesn't let go. The front line reconvenes for an exciting conversation among themselves, then Roy joins them to wrap up the solos with a few final remarks of musical bliss before the climax.

The ageless jazz standard, Woody 'n' You by Dizzy Gillespie opens Side Two making a grand out-of-harmony ensemble entrance with Dizzy in front segueing into the familiar rapid melody pace. Reece takes off first with a supercharged solo establishing he's in complete control of his instrument. Clifford offers an exceptional display of his mastery on the tenor sax with a radiant reading. Charles gives a breathtaking performance next that travels to stratospheric heights. Albert gives a brilliant solo that's extremely clever and inspired by Art's bouncy bass and Roy's impeccable timekeeping. Dizzy launches his second reading like a rocket with an invigorating presentation, then shares the spotlight with Roy for a few red-hot exchanges into the out-of-step climax. One For Trane by bassist Mickey Bass is a blues dedicated to John Coltrane and the sextet turns the heat up on the uptempo theme collectively. Albert solos first, dispensing passionate fury that sinks its teeth into the opening statement with fiery intensity and joyous spontaneity. Dizzy steps into the spotlight next with an exhilarating account illustrating his flawless technique and stylistic versatility. Charles charges into the third solo with cheerful optimism, then Clifford wails his behind off on the next scintillating performance. Albert has the final word on a vigorously energetic presentation culminating with the ensemble's stunning finish.

Manhattan Project was produced by Jim Neumann, a noted jazz record producer, and the founder of Bee Hive Records, and Fred Norsworthy whose excellent work as an engineer and producer can also be found on jazz recordings for Black Lion Records, Interplay Records, Jazzbank, Muse Records, P.J.L, Storyville and Trip Jazz. The album was pressed at Wakefield Manufacturing in Phoenix, Arizona. The lacquer was cut by Mastering engineer Brian Gardner who worked at Trident Studio in London, before working at Allen Zentz Mastering and Bernie Grundman Mastering in Hollywood, California. He currently owns Brian

Gardner Mastering and the listener can tell a lot of care went into making the best sounding record at the time. Recording Note: To achieve a tight, cohesive sound, Dizzy removed some of the sound baffles in the studio. This creates a close blending of instruments not unlike some of the '50s. The album has a superb soundstage throughout the treble, midrange and bass spectrum and delivers a crystal-clear sound of the instruments.

Dizzy Reece, now eighty-eight years young is still active as a musician and writer and has recorded albums for Blue Note, and other labels including Futura, Interplay Records, Jasmine, Jazz Vision, and New Jazz. On this album, the leader and his colleagues serve up a Hard-Bop feast with lots of energy that's put together very well and shows these guys have a perfect balance of technique, intellect, and emotion. If you're a fan of jazz trumpet, I invite you to audition Manhattan Project for a spot in your library. It's a compelling album that's sure to satisfy almost any jazz appetite by the other trumpeter named Dizzy whose recognition as a bandleader, composer, and gifted musician is long overdue.

Recording Note – Source: Album liner notes by Brian Davis

Woody 'n' You – Source: JazzStandards.com, Wikipedia.org



Hank Mobley, Billy Root, Lee Morgan, Curtis Fuller – Monday Night at Birdland
Fresh Sound Records

This next album from the library takes us to the legendary jazz club Birdland where Monday nights were always special, especially during the fifties and sixties. Musicians and vocalists who were performing would be off that night and the stage would be given to up and coming jazz artists. Thankfully, Roulette Records was available to record the performance on April 21st to give jazz fans, Monday Night at Birdland (Roulette R-52015/SR-52015) to enjoy for all who



couldn't be there in person. The Master of Ceremonies for these weekly jam sessions is the legendary jazz disc jockey, "Symphony Syd" Torin of WBNX in the Bronx, New York; WHOM in Jersey City, New Jersey, and WWRL, WMCA and WJZ in New York City. Syd announces all the tunes on the album and has a brief comment after three of them conclude. The stars of this set are Lee Morgan on trumpet; Curtis Fuller on trombone; Hank Mobley, Billy Root on tenor sax; Ray Bryant on piano; Tommy Bryant on bass and "Specs" Wright on drums. My copy used in this report is the 1988 Spanish Mono reissue (FSR-631) by Fresh Sound Records.

"Symphony Syd" starts the first side with the song's introduction; the septet then launches Walkin' by Richard Carpenter. The trio opens the song evolving into the ensemble's collective melody. Hank takes the spotlight first wailing enthusiastically followed by Lee who picks up the pace with a bright tone and feisty phrasing. Curtis takes the reins next with a considerable zest for a rousing performance, Ray solos with evident delight in the next reading. "Specs" takes the final scintillating statement in exchange with the front line for a robust finish into the closing chorus and climax. The septet eases the throttle back for the 1939 standard, All The Things You Are by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II. Fuller cooks at an easy groove on the opening melody, then infuses the lead solo with a lively simplicity and splendor. Mobley makes his presence felt on a brisk interpretation next, then Morgan illustrates his assured mastery on the trumpet with an engaging performance. Root takes his first solo next, giving an exquisite statement that fits the ensemble's artistic temperament with a superb reading. Bryant ends with a short solo that's profoundly moving before the collective reprise and coda.

Side Two opens with Milt Jackson's contemporary classic, Bags' Groove; it was written in 1952 and made its debut on Wizard of The Vibes released that year. After a collective theme treatment, Lee is up first, combining lyricism and emotion for a charming lead solo. Curtis soars joyously on the next statement, then comes Hank who takes the next reading with a solid rock-steady rhythm from beginning to end. Billy steps up next for a captivating performance unleashing red-hot notes from his horn and Ray glows brilliantly on the final spot ahead of the out-chorus and ovation. The set ends with an invigorating finale, There Will Never Be Another You by Harry Warren and Mack Gordon, originally written in 1942 and appearing in the musical film, Iceland. The propulsive power of Wright's drums

brings the song to life leading to the speedy melody. Mobley accelerates to race car speed on the opening statement and never decelerates. Root's tenor sax is an adrenaline rush on the next scintillating solo, followed by Morgan who also gives a spectacular exhibition. Fuller pulls no punches with a buoyant, effervescent interpretation next and Bryant shows he's a fierce and fervid performer on the closer before the closing chorus and appreciative applause from the crowd.

Monday Night at Birdland was produced by Rudy Taylor, who's also an arranger, jazz drummer, pianist, and vibraphonist. The sound quality of the album is quite good throughout, and Hank Mobley, Billy Root, Lee Morgan, Curtis Fuller, Ray Bryant, Tommy Bryant, and "Specs" Wright offer the listener the very essence of live jazz. In fact, there's only one noticeable defect, on Symphony Syd's introduction of Walkin', his microphone has a little harshness. I don't know if this appears on the original album or is exclusive to this LP. I'll admit, I'm not that familiar with Fresh Sound Records, and don't know if they're in that group of European labels like DOL, Doxy, Jazz Wax, Jazz Workshop, Wax Time, etc. However, I'm pretty impressed with what I've heard on this particular reissue and the performances are worth the price of admission for me to invite you to seek a copy of Monday Night at Birdland to check out for yourselves and form your own opinion!

Wizard of The Vibes (Blue Note LP 5011) – Source: Discogs.com

All The Things You Are, There Will Never Be Another You – Source: JazzStandards.com

Bags' Groove – Source: Wikipedia.org



John Coltrane – Coltrane's Sound
Rhino Records

Fans of modern Jazz know that John William Coltrane was in a league of his own as a bandleader, composer, soprano and tenor saxophonist, making some of his most substantial contributions to the music genre recording for Atlantic, Impulse and Prestige. The final album up for discussion this month is Coltrane's Sound (Atlantic 1419), originally recorded in 1960 at the same session that also gave the jazz world, My Favorite Things. This album was released in 1964, three years into Coltrane's contract with Impulse Records, capitalizing on his increasing popularity during the first half of the sixties. Though criminally underrated, it's an outstanding program of two timeless evergreens and four original tunes that Coltrane demonstrates are just as enjoyable as the standards. This album in my opinion also helps solidify his place as one of the most important musicians of the twentieth century. Completing the quartet are McCoy Tyner on piano, Steve Davis on bass and Elvin Jones on drums. My copy used in this report is the 2010 Rhino Records US Stereo Audiophile Reissue (SD 1419-R1 1419).

Side One opens with a sparkling rendition of The Night Has a Thousand Eyes, written in 1948 by Jerry Brainin and Buddy Bernier. This jazz and pop standard made its introduction in the film noir crime drama Night Has a Thousand Eyes, released that year. The movie was based on the 1945 novel by author Cornell Woolrich. The song is one of the most popular standards in The Great American Songbook and has been recorded numerous times as a vocal and instrumental. Sometimes played and sung sublimely, the quartet offers a lively theme treatment that's inspiring. John starts the soloing charging out the gate with a vigorous performance. McCoy heats up the closing reading with exuberant enthusiasm into the coda. Trane turns to the soprano sax for Central Park West, the first of four tunes by the leader. It opens with an alluring introduction and ends with an equally tender melody led by John who also expresses gentle feelings on the

opening statement with a soft timbre. The song's final solo by McCoy is an intimately polite presentation anchored by the affectionate infrastructure of Steve and Elvin.

The first side wraps up with Coltrane's Liberia, returning the foursome to an uptempo beat with a sprightly theme treatment in unison. John takes the opening statement, gradually building each verse efficiently into a passionate climax. Tyner displays his strong chops on a short closing solo that's stunning into Trane's reappearance for the finale. The ageless classic Body and Soul begins the second side with a midtempo rendition by the quartet. It was written in 1930 by Frank Eyton, Johnny Green, Edward Heyman, Robert Sour. The most famous instrumental version was made in 1939 by Coleman Hawkins for Bluebird and it's one of the most recorded standards in the history of music. The trio led by McCoy's cheerful piano introduces this chestnut and John provides a succulent treat of what's in store on the opening melody and heightens the mood on the lead solo. McCoy flavors the next reading with a joyful swing to the infectious beat, then Coltrane makes a final statement that's brief, but clever leading to the blissful conclusion.

Up next is Equinox, a slow tempo blues by John that was named by his first wife, Naima. The equinox occurs twice a year, the first one around March 21st and the second by September 23rd. It's the point when the sun crosses the equator with day and night, everywhere on earth approximately at an equal length. The rhythm section opens the song sensuously into Trane's elegantly tender opening chorus and passionate solo. Tyner concludes the readings with a delicately gentle performance over the soothing support of Davis' bass and Jones' elegant timekeeping. Coltrane's Satellite, the album finale is a trio performance following in the footsteps of Sonny Rollins' trio LP's with just the bass and drums providing the power behind him. This tune is a jubilant joyride with John blowing fire on the theme and excitingly fierce solo. Steve dazzles with feisty exuberance and Elvin brings the heat with aggressive brushwork behind John's reprising the theme into the climax.

The man behind the dials of the original recording was one of the best engineers in the business, Tom Dowd and Nesuhi Ertegün supervised the album's production. Bernie Grundman cut the lacquers from the original analog masters, utilizing premium 180-gram audiophile vinyl by RTI (Record Technology



Incorporated). The sound quality of Mr. Dowd's work has been beautifully remastered and is amazing throughout the treble, midrange and bass spectrum with a very revealing soundstage for the instruments placing the listener's favorite chair in the center of the studio alongside the musicians. If you're in the mood for an album of Hard-Bop and Modal Jazz, I invite you to audition Coltrane's Sound by John Coltrane. It's a great LP that makes a profound statement to a legendary jazz giant and a title that should not only appease and delight the serious jazz aficionado but the first-time listener as well! See you next month and Happy Listening Gang!

Body and Soul (Bluebird B-10523-A); My Favorite Things (Atlantic 1361/SD 1361) – Source: Discogs.com

The Night Has a Thousand Eyes, Body and Soul – Source: JazzStandards.com

Equinox – Source: The Merriam-Webster Unabridged Dictionary, Wikipedia.org