

**STEAMIN'
WITH
THE
MILES
DAVIS
QUINTET**

PRESTIGE 7200



RVG
REMASTERS



STEAMIN' WITH
THE MILES DAVIS QUINTET

MILES DAVIS trumpet JOHN COLTRANE tenor saxophone (except #3)
RED GARLAND piano PAUL CHAMBERS bass PHILLY JOE JONES drums

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|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 SURREY WITH THE FRINGE ON TOP 9:05 | 4 DIANE 7:49 |
| 2 SALT PEANUTS 6:09 | 5 WELL, YOU NEEDN'T 6:19 |
| 3 SOMETHING I DREAMED LAST NIGHT 6:15 | 6 WHEN I FALL IN LOVE 4:23 |



*I remember the sessions well, I remember how the musicians wanted to sound, and I remember their reactions to the playbacks.
Today, I feel strongly that I am their messenger. —RUDY VAN GELDER*

Recorded by RUDY VAN GELDER at Van Gelder Studio, Hackensack, NJ; May 11, 1956 ("Well, You Needn't" recorded October 26, 1956).

Supervision—BOB WEINSTOCK Remastering, 2007—RUDY VAN GELDER (Van Gelder Studio, Englewood Cliffs, NJ)

All transfers were made from the analog master tapes to digital at 24-bit resolution.

Notes by JOE GOLDBERG

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THE MILES DAVIS QUINTET

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PHILLY JOE JONES drums

One of the highest points of modern jazz is the quintet that Miles Davis led from late 1955 until spring of 1957. Its earliest manifestation appeared on a record called *The Musings of Miles* (Prestige 7007), on which Davis was backed by a rhythm section consisting of Red Garland, piano; Philly Joe Jones, drums; and Oscar Pettiford, bass. By the time Davis's next record had been released (*Miles*, Prestige 7014), he had a regular working group, in which Pettiford had been replaced by Paul Chambers and the tenor saxophone of John Coltrane had been added.

Except for the work he has done with Gil Evans, all of Davis's recording since that time has been an extension and further exploration of the musical ideas set down in those two records. Since the disbanding of that quintet, it has been called by many the most important and influential jazz group of its time. It is obviously the most influential, because the music it played and the style it employed has filtered into most jazz organizations, and the group restored to currency some of the best and most neglected popular songs of the last several years. In ultimate importance, probably only the Modern Jazz Quartet is of comparable stature. (Unfortunately, the Thelonious Monk Quartet with Coltrane, Jones, and Wilbur Ware was unrecorded, and of too brief

a duration to make the impact it might have; it is notable, though, that half its personnel were Davis alumni.) The pervasive impact of the Miles Davis Quintet (and its inspiration) is most closely analogous to the Louis Armstrong Hot Fives of 30 years before.

The present record, *Steamin' with the Miles Davis Quintet*, is the final selection from the legendary 1956 sessions which produced three previous classics (*Cookin'*, 7094; *Relaxin'*, 7129; and *Workin'*, 7166). Since the album is, in many respects representative of the total work of the quintet, it affords an excellent opportunity to examine just what this remarkable music was and how it was made.

To begin with, there is the matter of personnel. Among Miles Davis's several capabilities is the possession of the most accurate ear for new talent in jazz. Sonny Rollins, who has ample reason to know, calls him a "starmaker." But, if the critics of the time are to be believed, it is impossible to see how the quintet had any possible chance of success. The group consisted, we are told, of a trumpet player who could play only in the middle register and fluffed half his notes; an out-of-tune tenor player; a cocktail pianist; a drummer who played so loud that no one else could be heard; and a

teenage bassist. This, of course, is exaggeration to prove a point; today, the great majority of the quintet could lay serious claim to being the most skilled and influential players on their instruments. But the fact remains, talent aside, that the five men did not share a unity of style: more than many, this group needed a leader.

Davis has the qualities of leadership in abundance. One of the most notable examples of this is a record released on another company on which Miles, for contractual reasons, was nominally a sideman. But it is more than obvious, from the first note to the last, that it is a Miles record. It is, again, an extension of the principles on the first two albums. An important part of those principles lay in the area of material.

On *The Musings of Miles* he recorded "A Night in Tunisia," and on the present record he plays "Salt Peanuts," and "Well, You Needn't." The names that association brings to mind here are Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Thelonious Monk, the giants of the bop revolution. Davis does not play hard bop by any means, but he has kept these and similar tunes as a standard part of his basic repertoire, as a constant reminder of the era that gave him his original inspiration.

The previous two records included "There Is No Greater Love," and "I See

STEAMIN'

**SURREY WITH THE FRINGE ON TOP
SALT PEANUTS
SOMETHING I DREAMED LAST NIGHT**

**DIANE
WELL, YOU NEEDN'T
WHEN I FALL IN LOVE**

Your Face Before Me," and on the present release are "Something I Dreamed Last Night" and "When I Fall in Love." These are ballads, and Coltrane most often, did not play on the ballad tracks. It is probably his unique way with a ballad that first enabled Miles to reach out to the vast audience he has; an audience that, in several cases, has little affinity with any other jazz. As astute and detached an observer as British theatre critic Kenneth Tynan has referred to Miles as a musical lonely hearts club. In his sad, wistful, muted interpretations of ballads (in which he plays microphone as much as trumpet) he reveals an area of tenderness and sensitivity which is rarely visible in his public aspect. These performances, in the emotion they evoke and the man from which they come, are not comparable to anyone else in jazz, but do bear a striking similarity to Frank Sinatra.

The two early albums included "A Gal in Calico" and "Just Squeeze Me," and the present one has performances of "Surrey with the Fringe on Top" and "Diane." One of these is, of course, an Ellington composition, and Miles probably understands Ellington more than any contemporary musician except Mingus and Monk, but that is a subject for another time. These performances have several things in common, and it is through

them and others like them that the Davis concept has become most prevalent. They are all in the medium tempo peculiar to the quintet, which no one has ever successfully imitated. A large number of the pieces in this style were first played in this general manner by the Chicago pianist Ahmad Jamal, and make extensive use of Jamal's concepts of rhythm and space. Davis has said, "All my inspiration today comes from the Chicago pianist, Ahmad Jamal." This and similar statements have led many to credit Jamal with a stature which I do not feel he deserves. That Davis is able to derive valuable ideas from Jamal's music does not make Jamal Davis's musical equal. Most artists borrow, and the proof of their artistry lies partially in the fact that what they borrow they invariably enrich. At least part of the unique quality of these performances lies in a particular principle which Davis has grasped, a principle which is so simple that it has apparently eluded everyone else. To put it in terms of Miles's particular group, a quintet is not always a quintet. It can also be a quartet featuring Miles, and, at different times on the same tune, it can be a quartet featuring Coltrane, or a trio featuring either Garland or Chambers. The Davis rhythm section, Philly Joe Jones particularly, is extremely well aware of this, and gives each of the three

principal soloists their own best backing. Behind Miles, the rhythm is full of space, with few chords; behind Coltrane, it is compulsive; and with Garland, it lapses into an easy, Jamal-like feeling.

As with anything of great importance, though, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts; a point of view that can be proven, I think by the great majority of what these men have produced separately since 1957. A beginning attempt at analysis such as this, leaves out many factors, most notably the indefinable personal chemistry that resulted when these men played together.

Such chemistry is inexplicable, and so, apparently, is the personality of the man who generated it. Miles Davis has become a legend, and in that way, too, he is comparable only to Sinatra. Both men came back from what seemed the ruin of a career at about the same time, and now occupy a position that makes it next door to heresy to imply that these might be anything less than superb in the results of whatever they attempt. They are both setters of styles in dress and music, and both delight in indulging a passion for speed. Whatever either man does is automatically news, and yet both have a fierce insistence on personal privacy.

The company Miles finds himself in today can best be judged, I feel, by a

I WAS THE ENGINEER on the recording sessions and I also made the masters for the original LP issues of these albums. Since the advent of the CD, other people have been making the masters. Mastering is the final step in the process of creating the sound of the finished product. Now, thanks to the folks at the Concord Music Group who have given me the opportunity to remaster these albums, I can present my versions of the music on CD using modern technology. I remember the sessions well, I remember how the musicians wanted to sound, and I remember their reactions to the playbacks. Today, I feel strongly that I am their messenger. —RUDY VAN Gelder

STEAMIN' REVISITED

RECENTLY, the Concord Music Group released a boxed set featuring all of the Prestige recordings of what has come to be known as the First Great Miles Davis Quintet (*The Legendary Prestige Quintet Sessions*, PRC4-4444). Over the last several years, Columbia has released its own few recordings of the Quintet, which eventually morphed into the sextet that recorded *Kind of Blue*. Strange as it may seem, many younger Davis fans have never heard of this quintet, largely because Wynton Marsalis, with a presidential knack for turning private opinion into public fiat, has decreed that the Second Great—or Sixties—Miles Davis Quintet is the root of modern jazz. In the 8-CD set *Live at the Plugged Nickel* the Sixties band played the Fifties book with such free time and harmonics that it shouldn't have surprised anyone when Miles stopped playing standards shortly thereafter. But the Sixties band lacked the Fifties' secret weapon, the other horn being the most phenomenally influential saxophonist since the death of Charlie Parker, John Coltrane.

This album, *Steamin' with the Miles Davis Quintet*, is the last of four drawn from an unprecedented recording session, two days (months apart), during which Miles called tunes and played them through much as he would on the bandstand. The record is now 50-years-old, but certainly doesn't sound it.

My original notes are not quite that old. These recordings were made because Miles was leaving Prestige for Columbia, and wanted to discharge his contractual obligations as efficiently as possible. The result is some wonderful music by the best and most influential small group around that probably would not have been made otherwise.

Bob Weinstock, owner and founder of Prestige, who supervised these sessions, knew the value of what he had. He released the four albums at the rate of about one a year, and wound up with more music by the original Miles Davis Quintet than Columbia ever got, what with personnel changes, and Miles's concentration on the series of orchestral albums he made with Gil Evans.

I see no reason to repeat the information and opinions I offered back in the day. The essay stands up pretty well for me, and apparently for other people too since certain sections of it—the description of the quintet as it was originally received, the description of the rhythmic procedures of the band, the comparisons to Frank Sinatra—have been widely quoted or paraphrased.

But some additional things now become evident. Recently, in a conversation about the state of jazz, Gunther Schuller said to me, "I wish the kids realized there were other musicians besides Miles and John Coltrane." It's astonishing. At one point last year Coltrane had the first and third best-selling albums in the charts, despite the handicap of having been dead for 40 years. Miles, gone for 17, still bestrides the narrow world like a Colossus. He is everywhere. A writer recently took the "making of" formula usually applied to movies and began applying it to jazz records. His first book was about Miles's *Kind of Blue* and his second was about *A Love Supreme*. The quintet, in its original form, only lasted about a year and a half, and didn't record that much music. The only group to approach them as objects of adoration was the Thelonious Monk Quartet that also featured Coltrane, and which attained its legendary status largely because it was thought, until recently, to have never recorded at all.

But how could a group that only worked intermittently and only produced a few albums, attain such high impact? There is an example at hand from America's other great Twentieth Century art form, the movies.

The Sixties are rightly considered a time of upheaval in America, but they were prepared for by the Fifties. A time when nothing happened. The Eisenhower Years, or as Gore Vidal called them, the Golfer's dull terror. But there was a lot going on. Miles and Coltrane and Monk to begin with. And Brando and Kerouac and Pollock and Rothko.

And James Dean.

James Dean was the acolyte of Brando, just as Miles Davis was the acolyte of Dizzy Gillespie. He never made a movie he didn't star in. But he only made three of them—*Rebel Without a Cause*, *East of Eden*, and *Giant*. Before the last one came out, in one of the most famous of automobile accidents, he was smacked by a man named Turnupseed. His next picture was to have been *Somebody Up There Likes Me*, but instead, Paul Newman made it. If he had lived, he would have had his pick of scripts. But he remains a legend, because of his looks, and because of his style.

Could the same be said of Miles? Right after this period, Miles changed. He stopped wearing the Italian suits that caused *Esquire* to name him one of the best-dressed men in America. He also became an elder statesman—with the Sixties, he began appearing with men half his age. And began playing the music that recently got him inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. And dressed in clothes in which most men would be afraid to appear anywhere. I read somewhere that the éminence grise of the fashion world, Andre Leon Talley, was once Miles's personal shopper. Can you think of any other jazz musician who ever had a personal shopper?

But when he recorded this music, Miles was still wearing suits, still playing standards, still recording with men his own age, and profoundly and forever changing the sound of jazz trumpet.

—JOE GOLDBERG
MARCH 2007

RUDY VAN GELDER REMASTERS

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TADD DAMERON WITH JOHN COLTRANE—
Mating Call (PRCD-30163-2)

THELONIOUS MONK TRIO (PRCD-30164-2)

1 SURREY WITH THE FRINGE ON TOP 9:05
(Rodgers-Hammerstein) Williamson Music/ASCAP

2 SALT PEANUTS 6:09
(Gillespie-Clarke) Universal-MCA Music/ASCAP

3 SOMETHING I DREAMED LAST NIGHT 6:15
(Yellen-Magidson-Fain) Fain Music/Magidson Music/WB Music/ASCAP

4 DIANE 7:49
(Rapee-Pollack) Rapee Music/Bug Music/ASCAP

5 WELL, YOU NEEDN'T 6:19
(Thelonious Monk) Regent Music/BMI

6 WHEN I FALL IN LOVE 4:23
(Young-Heyman) Chappell & Co./Intersong USA-ASCAP

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Recorded by RUDY VAN GELDER at Van Gelder Studio,
Hackensack, NJ; May 11, 1956
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RUDY VAN GELDER REMASTERS

