
the bill evans trio
on a monday evening

Sugar Plum *5:27*
(Bill Evans)

Up With the Lark *6:03*
(Leo Robin-Jerome Kern)

Time Remembered *5:30*
(Bill Evans)

T.T.T. (Twelve Tone Tune) *5:04*
(Bill Evans)

Someday My Prince Will Come *6:12*
(Frank Churchill-Larry Morey)

Minha (All Mine) *3:46*
(Raymond Evans-Francis Hime-Jay Livingston)

All of You *9:38*
(Cole Porter)

Some Other Time *4:47*
(Betty Comden-Adolph Green-Leonard Bernstein)

Bill Evans - piano • Eddie Gomez - bass • Eliot Zigmund - drums

LIVE BILL EVANS IN 1976

Common thinking looks upon the 1970s as a downtime for jazz: traditional, acoustic styles unceremoniously pushed off the stage by younger, plugged-in music channeling the look, rhythm and volume of rock. The new jazz breed

had to join in or step aside. Fusion, jazz-funk and other hybrids gave birth to new stars as the giants of the past were shunted aside.

To hear it from the three musicians who created the music on this album together in 1976, as the Bicentennial year was winding down, it was in fact a time that brought more attention to *all* styles of the music—past, present and future—with an increasing recognition and respect for many of those heroes.
"Yes, we had Fusion and all that electric stuff [with] great jazz guys who were just starting to cross over and experiment," says drummer Eliot Zigmund. "We were still at a point where it was helping because acoustic jazz was being swept along by it. There was still a fairly good jazz audience there, knowledgeable about the music." Bassist Eddie Gomez appreciated the expanded jazz palette of the day: "I always liked those different planets I could visit musically back then. But even when there was all this other stuff going around, I think Bill stood for something. He had a very deep, core musical value and that was important." "And it's not like people didn't know who Bill was," Zigmund adds. "He was starting to get to the point where he had star status."
In 1976, measured by reputation or box office receipts, Bill Evans was ascendant, and so was jazz.

"I predicted five or six years ago that jazz is getting healthier and healthier all the time," Evans said in a radio interview the day before the performance that comprises this album. Larry Goldberg and James Farber were the two college-age deejays who spoke with Evans, members of a growing, musically literate generation who counted themselves fortunate to cross paths with a player of his stature. The pianist continued, "The most encouraging thing about it is besides the fact that it's becoming much more important economically is that the young audience is turning onto it in greater numbers every day."
Evans was acutely aware of the changes brought on by the '70s. Yet—if the spirit in his words reveals anything—he had found his happy place amid the musical currents. "I

just require for my own pleasure that music somehow touch me somewhere along the line and use the musical language in a way that speaks to me in some really human terms. Maybe I'm just an old moldy fig now. It really can happen you know. You were born in a certain time and there's nothing you can do about it."

Acceptance is indeed a virtue, as is embracing what fate hands us. In response to Evans' comment, one deejay could not help bemoan the fact he was "born too late. I missed Bird and Coltrane!" Without missing a beat, Evans countered, "Well, then you're born early enough to catch what's happening..."

On a Monday Evening is many things: an encouraging message from one jazz generation to the next that piano trio music still mattered in a day known for louder sounds and larger gestures; assurance that transcendence could still happen in a single set on a Monday evening (November 15, 1976 was the start of that week) and that piano jazz, of the kind that Evans had helped invent, was alive and enduringly popular, enough to fill a 1,000-seat venue like the Union Theater at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. It's also evidence that the instincts of two music enthusiasts—Goldberg (who stuck with public broadcasting for decades at WGBH in Boston)and Farber (now a veteran jazz recording engineer in New York City with a long, estimable line of credits)—were right to follow their instincts, when they recorded and archived the concert that night.

On a Monday Evening also serves as confirmation that Evans, despite health issues brought on by years of narcotic addiction, was still at the top of his game in '76, and still developing his sound. As this recording reveals, his approach had grown to include a wider range of moods and rhythms, surprisingly strident at times considering his primary reputation for introspection and trance-like effect, with head bowed dangerously low over the keys.

"It's funny listening to this music," says Gomez. "I really like the way Bill sounds—he has a certain kind of drive, a particular kind of energy that I really like and I think Eliot and I responded in kind. Bill was obviously a total artist and complicated and therefore his energetic part was always there and his more serial part. It's like the Thespian mask, the dark and the bright. I think it had as much—if not everything—to do with where he was in his music and in his personal life and at this point I think he was very inspired."

In fact, Evans was doing well at the time. He was newly married to Nenette Zazzara, whom he had met in Redondo Beach, California, and who had a daughter Maxine. Their union produced a son, Evan, in '75 and the four moved to a house in

L-R: Eliot Zigmund, Eddie Gomez, Bill Evans

his native New Jersey. For the first time in his professional life, Evans would end his tours by returning to a home and family.

Whatever the reason for the increased stridency in Evans' playing, *On a Monday Evening* distinguishes itself further with a marked level of collective spontaneous communication that few jazz groups—then or now—are able to achieve.

"That was nothing new," admits Gomez of Evans' in-the-moment, sharing-the-lead approach in the trio, one which allowed the piano, bass or drums to choose to steer the direction of the performance, even within the set structure of familiar tunes. "There was this democracy between piano, drums and the bass that was very influential and very free. Before I joined the trio I had listened a lot to the trio Bill had with Scott [LaFaro] and Paul [Motian] and I loved that whole approach. So we weren't innovating that idea [and] I knew enough about the music scene to know there really were very few musical situations where you could do that.

"One of the metaphors I like to use when I talk about this is sports, because in basketball for instance a team has set plays but they also have to react in the moment, and improvised music also has those things, and requires very high levels of concentration and intuition and it doesn't always come out the way you expect it to. The music changes every night with little nuances and it brings certain other things to life, and the audience is a part of that too. So as a musician you always come to the game, to that concert, with the intention of having it be fresh and also disciplined as well."

By '76, Gomez had been with Evans for nine out of what would be an eleven-year run, longer than any other player who would work with the pianist. Gomez's distinctive snap and buzz on the bass, and his plucked and arco solos, had become an inherent part of the trio's sound. Zigmund was the trio's junior member. His association had begun in '75 after a brief audition at the famed Village Vanguard during which his sensitivity to the details of Evans' sound proved invaluable: "I had this

great sizzle cymbal, a K, and I made certain to bring it. I knew Bill loved that from his early recordings with Paul…I think that's actually what got me the gig."

Evans gave Zigmund credit beyond his instrument: "I was most impressed with his touch and the way he listened and responded to the music. It's worked out really

beautifully—he's affected the music and brings a fresh, very sensitive thing to the trio."

Zigmund, in turn, admits being both challenged and picking up stylistic cues of how to approach the music. "I was in awe of Bill at that point. All those tunes felt like majestic symphonies in his hands. I had a working knowledge of classical music so I would approach each tune in a really dramatic way, wanting to make as much contrast with the time, with the colors and with the volume. We had a good rhythmic groove together.

"Eddie once described Bill as having the talent of Mozart and I feel the same way. He had that kind of sensitivity and complexity. At one point he thought he might become a classical composer—it's just that he chose to be a jazz musician."

The Evans/Gomez/Zigmund union lasted for just two years—Gomez being the first to depart in '77—yet it still stands as one of the pianist's most distinctive and memorable groups. *On a Monday Evening* is a rare, high-fidelity snapshot of that association; as Zigmund points out, "There's really nothing like that, a definitive live recording of that trio. There are some great studio dates and some bootlegs, but we had so many good nights. So it's great that there's finally an official recording out that represents our live side." Gomez is pleased as well, both with the trio's onstage magic being restored and released, and with the trio's performance on this one particular night in '76. He admits that at first glance he expected nothing too special.

"I saw the set list and it had tunes I remember us doing a lot, but right away, in the first minute I was surprised! It was 'Sugar Plum'—I heard Bill play something kind of understated; then we all joined in, and all of a sudden it boomeranged into something else. It's such a small shift in the music and it happens pretty quickly.

"But one of the components of the art is surprise—and there are a lot of surprises that would happen like

that. We really were playing for each other as much for the audience. I think it shows how there was a real delightful playfulness—but a serious one—happening in the trio, and in this concert. And you can tell by how the audience reacted."

"We had a repertoire of between 16 and 20 tunes that Bill would pull from for the first night in a club or for a concert," says Zigmund. "He'd usually start with 'Up With the Lark' or something else, and the sets from night to night for a period of a month would remain pretty much the way they were. Occasionally he'd change the order but I remember he was slow to add the tunes from the list we did in this concert, so a set like this took a while to come together."

Evans' slowly shifting repertoire yielded a set list that night in Madison featuring newer material and longstanding signature tunes. Sugar Plum"—built on an improvised melodic snippet from Evans' performance of "Angel Face" on his *Intermodulation* album—first appeared on 1971's *The Bill Evans Album*, as did "Twelve Tone Tune," which highlighted Evans' penchant for pulling lyricism from an academic musical approach. "Up With the Lark," a Jerome Kern composition from 1945, was a more recent Evans discovery, released first on *The Tokyo Concert* from 1973; "Minha"—by Brazilian pianist and singer Francis Hime—entered the Evans canon on his '75 duet album *Intuition* with Gomez.

"Time Remembered" (an Evans original first recorded during a 1962 television broadcast), "Someday My Prince Will Come" (the Disney film waltz Dave Brubeck introduced to the jazz world in 1957, and which Evans covered on his *Portrait in Jazz* album two years later), and "All of You" (a Cole Porter standard Evans played often while with the Miles Davis Sextet in '58) were among the crowd-pleasing favorites in the trio's songbook in '76. Did Evans consciously choose these tunes with the audience in mind?

"I don't think he looked at it that way," says Gomez. "He didn't write anything down—at least I don't remember seeing lists of what we were going to play. He was really all about how he felt in the moment and how he felt connected to himself and the trio. There were bright moments, but it could change abruptly. The encore that night ['Some Other Time']—I think he felt that in the moment and it felt like it was a gift to us, the trio."

A standout on *On a Monday Evening* is certainly the show-ender Evans offered that night, Leonard Bernstein's moody ballad from *On the Town*—a custom fit to the pianist's typically languid pace and laconic feel. Evans recorded it for his 1959 breakthrough album *Everybody Digs Bill Evans*, which also featured "Peace Piece," an equally soul-stilling, modal original based on the opening chords of the Bernstein tune. "Some Other Time" remained an Evans staple till the end, often played live, and famously included on his 1975 recording with Tony Bennett. As the parting gesture on *On a Monday Evening*, the melody serves as both a reminder of past explorations and of Evans' unending spirit of discovery, an ellipsis pointing to what was still to come—the next evening, the next week, the next studio date.

"In a certain way we were going back to an earlier time with the trio at that point," Zigmund says with a pensive air. "I think that aspect of Bill's music had been missing in recent years. His music had evolved again, and with us it was more a return to original values, the kind of searching that he was doing with the first trio."

— Ashley Kahn, September, 2016

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Tape Archivist: James Farber
Mastered by Paul Blakemore at CMG Mastering
Tape transfer and audio restoration by
John Chester and Jamie Howarth, Plangent Processes
Liner notes: Ashley Kahn
Editorial: Ryan Jebavy
Project Assistance: Chris Cough, Mary Hogan, Evelyn Mowbray,
Mason Williams, Ryan Wilson, Willie Wisely
Artwork and Package Design: Sean Winter
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Production Note:
While painstaking efforts have been employed in audio restoration and mastering to clean up the sonics and coax every possible bit of audio detail out of this previously unreleased live concert recording of the 1976 Bill Evans Trio, some of the sonic anomalies that are present in the source analog mono master tape do, unavoidably, still exist. However, we felt that the spellbinding musicality of these performances and the great historical value of making these previously unheard recordings available to the public for the very first time far outweigh any concerns about the remaining issues of audio fidelity inherent in the source master tape.

billevansofficial.com concordmusicgroup.com