

European concert volumes one & two

# the modern jazz quartet

the modern jazz quartet

STEREO

volume one

STEREO

European concert



HOW THEN THE MODERN JAZZ QUARTET IS KNOWN FOR OVER 25 YEARS AND HAS ESTABLISHED ITSELF INTO AUDIENCES AND LISTENERS, WITHOUT JAZZ DIRECTED OR CLASSICALLY DIRECTED, WHETHER IN THE UNITED STATES, EUROPE OR THE NEAR EAST, IT IS HARDLY THE CASE TO HEAR ABOUT THE QUARTET. ALL THE SUPERLATIVE WHICH ONE CAN IMAGINE FROM ONE'S MIND OR HEART AND TO WISH THAT THE SOUND OF THE MODERN JAZZ QUARTET'S CREATIVE AND SUPREME ARTISTRY'S WAS, HOWEVER, AS MUCH OF THE MODERN AND, MORE PRACTICALLY, THE MOVEMENT, OF JOHN LEWIS, PERRY GORDON, MATT JACKSON AND CONNOR DAY, THEIR SELF-DISCIPLINED GROWTH, FROM A

the modern jazz quartet

STEREO

volume two

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European concert



IT HAS REMAINED FOR THE MODERN JAZZ QUARTET TO DEVISE A PRACTICABLE METHOD FOR CREATIVE AND FORMAL REPRESENTATION BY FOUR MODERNISTS (MATT JACKSON, MATT JACKSON, PERRY GORDON, MATT JACKSON) IN THIS TECHNIQUE IS EQUAL TO THE GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT OF MODERN MUSICAL HISTORY, INCLUDING THE TRANSCENDENT CREATION OF THE SOUND OF THE BAROQUE AND EARLY EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY PERIODS OF MUSICAL DEVELOPMENT, AND HARMONY. THE MODERN JAZZ HAS NOTED THE REPRESENTATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT OF THE QUARTET: "IT BEARS THAT LEWIS, WITH HIS ASSURANCE AND SUBTLETY, TO THE LANGUAGE OF MODERN JAZZ HAS FOR THE SMALL GROUP AT LEAST

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150. The School of Jazz grew out of the obvious necessity for a professional workshop for jazz musicians which would provide "sitting in" experience for the apprentices in the field and at the same time give them the first public exposure which leads to eventual jobs in jazz. The School is already able to evaluate its effectiveness, having gained financial support from the jazz business and art patrons, seen the introduction of Ornette Coleman, and provided the model against which colleges have patterned new jazz programs.

But to mention only The School Of Jazz is to forget the Quartet's impact on The Monterey Festival (with John Lewis as artistic director), the formation of New York's first jazz and classical music society, the inresidence group stature of the MJQ at the Berkshire Music Barn in Lenox, and their participation in countless educational programs created for experiment with and exposure of jazz.

Theirs is a world of new criticism and a more prevalent tendency toward critical analysis. A world in which a new vocabulary has

appeared with such expressions as "third stream." A world of promotional materials with the result that one is likely to find one of their posters from a recent engagement for sale at Georg Jensen.

This album is an inevitable result of this kind of world. It appears after the Quartet has achieved its distinctive musical stature and at a time when each member of the group is in unquestioned command of his instrument and musical technique. It is the musical defense of Ralph Gleason's comment that: "In a very real sense, the MJQ is a microcosm of the modern jazz scene. Within it are all the elements of importance affecting modern jazz—reaffirmation of the debt to the blues, intelligent use of classical devices and harmonies, a choice repertory of originals as well as the best show tunes and ballads. Beneath it all flows a pulsating rhythm, fine as a diamond drill, moving the whole inexorably, though delicately, on through time." It is a statement of their world.

—JULE FOSTER

(from the original liner notes)

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# the modern jazz quartet



ORIGINAL  
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# modern jazz quartet



## european concert volume one

**N**ow that the Modern Jazz Quartet is almost ten years old and has established itself with audiences and listeners, whether jazz-directed or classically-directed, whether in the United States, Europe or the Near East, it is almost too easy to heap upon the quartet all the superlatives which one can muster from one's memory or dictionary and to hope that the sound of the most unique's, world's greatest's and supreme artistry's will somehow be indicative of the work and, more practically, the achievement, of John Lewis, Percy Heath, Milt Jackson and Connie Kay. Their self-disciplined growth, from a vague and shadowy 1951-1954 beginning

with a few experimental recording and practice sessions, the first public concerts, and the formation of a musical philosophy, has elevated the Quartet to the enviable position of international respect. However, since the Quartet has chosen to wait until now to release any recording of a concert performance—when they felt that, finally, it was time to preserve an entire concert for immediate and eventual judgment—it is perhaps also time to take note of some of those events and directions which have become the world of The Modern Jazz Quartet.

The world of The Modern Jazz Quartet is a world of ordered creative reaction which sprang from the now sometimes forgotten, quiet admonition of John Lewis early in the Quartet's concert life... "I think that the audience for jazz can be widened if we strengthen our work with structure. If there is more of a reason for what is going on, there'll be more over-all sense and therefore, more interest for the listener... The improvised and written sections should not take on too much complexity—the total effect must be within the mind's ability to appreciate through the ear. Also, the music will have to swing, but remember that all music must do this, must have a meaningful rhythmic sense..."

Remembered in retrospect and in terms of what the Quartet has become, this statement

is transformed into a kind of a pragmatic creed in jazz and a statement of purpose which has restricted the work of the Quartet to a constant development and restudy of their style within the limits of a specific direction, but at the same time provided the foundation for their apparent musical freedom... even though originally it was offered merely as a description of what the Quartet was trying to do. Whether considered within or without the historical context, this intention has become the nucleus of a reaction throughout the critical, musical, and business aspects of the total jazz field; a reaction which has even served notice and had discernible effect throughout contemporary music. This statement and its musical translation has affected, not only the Quartet's music, but the music around them, the attitudes toward the nature of a jazz performance, jazz recording, attempts to place jazz within the total perspective of contemporary music, the nature of musical creation, jazz promotion, and the way of life which the Quartet has chosen to lead.

Seldom has a musical group from any musical age had the profound effect on the performance practices of its age that the Quartet has had on the performance practices of jazz. Before there was a Modern Jazz Quartet, there were jazz concerts. The Quartet did not invent the idea, and yet, they have

been named "the first pure concert ensemble in jazz." There are both visual and musical reasons for the qualification of The Modern Jazz Quartet as *the* concert ensemble, even during the lifetime of Duke Ellington.

Visually, The Modern Jazz Quartet has eliminated distraction from the jazz concert stage. It was with full intent that the four members of the group have sought to lose the individual personality within the unit by following close rules of stage arrangement and dress. Aesthetically as dull-looking on the stage as a string quartet (the British critics have called one of their performances, "jazz in sober suits"), the Quartet's stage attitude forces the audience into a state of listening. The unity of the group disqualifies individual showmanship and superficial characterization by any of the players which might intrude on the real business at hand, the musical program. What is gained is the aesthetic opportunity for full display of musical individuality and technical virtuosity of the individual members.

This visual concept was necessary because of the Quartet's most severe performance practice and challenge, concert improvisation. Improvisation is, of course, forever regarded as the essence of jazz and the most important of its musical characteristics, but it cannot be taken automatically for granted that all jazz groups improvise. Realistically speaking, the



majority of the groups do not achieve any real sense of improvisation at all, with the exception of an occasional solo; and too often the jazz concert consists merely of canned arrangements of tunes which have become popular, and whatever improvisation existed, existed only during the first playing of the composition, however many months or years before this was done.

—JULE FOSTER  
(from the original liner notes)



## european concert volume two

It has remained for The Modern Jazz Quartet to devise a practicable method for creative and formal improvisation by four musicians simultaneously, and their achievement in this technique is equal to the greatest achievement of western musical history, including the transcendent creativity of the soloists of the baroque and early

eighteenth century periods of musical development. Max Harrison, the British critic, has noted the improvisational achievement of the quartet: "it seems that Lewis, with his additions and modifications to the language of modern jazz, has, for the small group at least succeeded in utilizing more elaborate forms while preserving the soloist's freedom. The innovations have been proved valid, and form and content, improvisation and composition have in his hands entered into a closer, more complex relationship than ever before in modern jazz... To hear the Quartet play pieces like *Django* twice in one day with largely different solos on each occasion was to realize that the group is very far from stagnation. The MJQ presented more improvisation per concert than any other group that has visited us (England) and this increased one's admiration for their innovations in other directions all the more."

The proof of the meaning of jazz improvisation that this album provides the listener is one of its special significances. Many of the compositions played here have been released before... some of them (*Django*, *Vendome*) even twice before. The time taken for a short session of comparative listening will give ample evidence of the Quartet's intent to "constantly develop a musical idea as long as it is within the repertoire of the

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Quartet. When we cannot further develop a composition, we drop it." (John Lewis). The recording of a composition by the MJQ has always represented, only a single stage in its development; thus, their studio recordings exist as "manuscript" statements for historical and musicological purposes as much as for the record libraries of their audience. These recordings, therefore, may be used as a score against which one may compare these first, in-concert performances. The difference between the versions is one of creative development of music ideas—improvisation.

But what of the remainder of the world of the MJQ? That world which deals with the business of being in the jazz concert business, in promotion, in teaching, and in innovation in a field which relies on criticism, to a great extent, for its popularity and audience acceptance?

The Quartet has destroyed most barriers which have existed between the traditional concert stage and the Jazz concert stage. They have remembered their jazz audience, however, and more often than not, have taken that audience along wherever they play—at The Apollo, The Vanguard, or The Maggio Musicale Fiorentino. The Quartet recognized the demands of the concert stage and willingly accepted a concert apprenticeship. Their first extensive tour through Europe in 1957 includ-

ed the playing of 88 concerts within a period of four months, most of them solo concerts. The group made a whistlestop tour through every available hall in Western Germany on the slimmest of concert budgets. But this was essentially a matter of bringing their music to a new audience on the terms of that audience and served as the Quartet's declaration of concert purpose.

At that time began the many first-appearances-by jazz which are a part of the MJQ history... The Belgian Decade of American Contemporary Music, the concert at the Mozarteum, in Salzburg, the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, the Donaueschingen Festival in Germany, among them. The Quartet pioneered a concert trail which this year will be extended to Japan and the Far East, and through which many jazz groups of the new genre will most likely follow.

The Quartet's interest in the institutions of jazz is characterized by their participation in and founding of The School of Jazz in Lenox, Massachusetts. With John Lewis as the musical director, and Heath, Jackson, and Kay as the nucleus of a faculty which has included Dizzy Gillespie, Max Roach, Oscar Peterson, Gunther Schuller, and J. J. Johnson, the School has completed four successful August sessions with an alumni presently numbering over



**european concert** volumes one & two

## **the modern jazz quartet**

**european concert**





# the modern jazz quartet european concert

## volume one

1. **django** 5:32  
(John Lewis)
2. **bluesology** 4:39  
(Milt Jackson)
3. **i should care** 5:33  
(Sammy Cahn, Axel Stordahl, Paul Weston)
4. **la ronde** 3:07  
(John Lewis)
5. **i remember clifford** 5:15  
(Benny Golson)
6. **festival sketch** 4:41  
(John Lewis)
7. **vendome** 2:45  
(John Lewis)
8. **odds against tomorrow** 6:57  
(John Lewis)  
Originally released in 1962 as Atlantic 1385

THE MODERN JAZZ QUARTET IS COMPOSED OF JOHN LEWIS, piano; MILT JACKSON, vibraphone; PERCY HEATH, bass; CONNIE KAY, drums. Recorded in Scandinavia in April, 1960.  
Recording engineer; GOSTA WIHOLM. Cover photos: LEE FRIEDLANDER. Supervision: Nesuhi Ertegun

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## volume two

9. **pyramid (blues for junior)** 8:45  
(Ray Brown)
10. **it don't mean a thing (if it ain't got that swing)** 5:36  
(Duke Ellington, Irving Mills)
11. **skating in central park** 6:05  
(John Lewis, Judy Spence)
12. **the cylinder** 6:20  
(Milt Jackson)
13. **'round midnight** 3:46  
(Bernie Hanighen, Cootie Williams, Thelonious Monk)
14. **bags' groove** 5:14  
(Milt Jackson)
15. **i'll remember april** 4:53  
(Gene De Paul, Don Raye, Pat Johnson)  
Originally released in 1962 as Atlantic 1386  
Total Time: 79:42



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# the modern jazz quartet european concert

## volume one

## volume two

the modern jazz quartet

volume one

european concert



When the Modern Jazz Quartet began to record, the jazz world was still in the throes of the bebop revolution. The quartet, consisting of John Lewis (piano), Mollie Klein (double bass), Percy Heath (drums), and John Lewis (saxophone), was one of the first to blend the bebop style with a more classical approach. Their music was characterized by its sophisticated harmonic language and its emphasis on improvisation. The quartet's recordings were highly influential and helped to establish the modern jazz quartet as a major force in the jazz world.

the modern jazz quartet

volume two

european concert



The Modern Jazz Quartet's recordings were highly influential and helped to establish the modern jazz quartet as a major force in the jazz world. Their music was characterized by its sophisticated harmonic language and its emphasis on improvisation. The quartet's recordings were highly influential and helped to establish the modern jazz quartet as a major force in the jazz world.



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