INTRODUCTION

Pianist Bill Evans was without question one of the most influential jazz musicians, and in the opinion of many the most influential white musician ever to play jazz. Although he composed throughout his career, his output increased in the last few years of his career when the increased harmonic richness of this final period (about 1978 to his death) was reflected in his writing as well as his playing. Compare *Laurie*, first recorded in 1979, to *Waltz For Debbie*, composed in 1954. The earlier piece sounds very reminiscent of a show tune, but *Laurie* is full of altered chords and devices unique to Evans.

Actually, we can see a lot of Evans' interest in altered chords and unusual chord movement in the earliest composition in this collection, appropriately enough titled *Very Early*. It was written for a composition assignment when Evans was a student at Southeast Louisiana University. *Waltz For Debbie* came about five years later just after Evans finished a stint in the army and his niece Debby was two years old. Although the theme is usually stated in the waltz time the title implies, Evans often switched to 4/4 time for improvising, as does the rhythm section on this recording.

In his liner notes to The Bill Evans Album (Columbia C30855, OP), Fred Binkley writes that "Bill played *Funkallero* as a piano solo on one of his first jobs in New York," which suggests a mid-fifties composition date, even though the first recording was in August, 1962 with a quintet that included Zoot Sims. *Peri's Scope*, named for a girlfriend, premiered on the first album by the trio that included Scott LaFaro on bass and Paul Motian on drums. *Walkin' Up, Interplay* and *Time Remembered* were first recorded in 1962, but the tape of the latter sat in the can for over a decade.

Turn Out The Stars was composed a couple of days before Evans' celebrated Town Hall concert in 1966, where it was first performed as part of a tribute to his recently deceased father. It has since become one of the compositions most closely identified with the pianist. The title was suggested to Evans by Gene Lees, who wrote lyrics for the song as well as the words to *Very Early* and *Waltz For Debbie*. These lyrics, incidentally, are available in a songbook from the TRO-Richmond Organization.

Laurie was named after a lady Evans was close to in the last few years of his life. The tune has an elusive quality that marks many of Evans' compositions. The most conventional pieces in this collection are *Interplay*, one of the few blues Evans ever wrote (or played, for that matter), and *Funkallero*, whose preponderance of ii–V–i patterns present no particular problems to an improviser. *Waltz For Debbie* is within the mainstream of the popular song, but the rest of the compositions in this collection present some unique challenges and give us some insight into the art of one of the most creative musicians ever to play and compose jazz.

I would like to thank the following for their assistance in the preparation of these notes: Hanns Petrik, whose biography of Evans has recently been published in Germany; Ron Nethercutt of the Bill Evans Library at Southeastern Louisiana University; and I would like to acknowledge the value of Peter Larsen's Turn On The Stars, an out-of-print discography of Evans' recordings.

Phil Bailey, 1989

DISCOGRAPHY

NOTE: Where LP and CD are available, LP number is given first; CD number follows the slash. In most cases, only US release numbers in print a presstime are given. More than one number within a set of parentheses indicates availability of the same take on more than one album. An asterisk (*) indicates first recording. OP signifies out-of-print recordings at presstime; some may be in print in some countries, possibly with another number.

Funkallero. First recorded 8/21/62 but apparently written about seven years earlier.
D. Benoit (GRP CD GRD-9595)
B. Evans Quintet (*Milestones LP M-47066; Riverside R-018/RCD-018-2)
B. Evans/S. Getz (Verve 2-2510/833 802-2)
B. Evans Trio (Columbia LP C 30855; CG 33672; both OP)
M. Wofford Quartet (Trend CD TRCD-552)