

CHARLIE PARKER - THE COMPLETE SAVOY STUDIO SESSIONS - SAVOY 5500

5-record box

(The numbers in parenthesis indicate the number of takes of each piece included)

Tiny Grimes - 1944 September 15:

TINY'S TEMPO (3) - I'LL ALWAYS LOVE YOU JUST THE SAME (2) - ROMANCE WITHOUT FINANCE (5) - RED CROSS (2)

Charlie Parker - 1945 November 26:

BILLIE'S BOUNCE (3) - WARMING UP A RIFF (1) - BILLIE'S BOUNCE (2) - NOW'S THE TIME (4) - THRIVING ON A RIFF (3) - MEANDERING (1) - KOKO (2)

Charlie Parker - 1947 May 8:

DONNA LEE (5) - CHASIN' THE BIRD (4) - CHERYL (2) - BUZZY (5)

Miles Davis - 1947 August 14:

MILESTONES (3) - LITTLE WILLIE LEAPS (3) - HALF NELSON (2) - SIPPIN' AT BELLS (4)

Charlie Parker - 1947 December 21:

ANOTHER HAIR DO (4) - BLUEBIRD (3) - KLAUNSTANCE (1) - BIRD GETS THE WORM (3)

Charlie Parker - 1948 September 18:

BARBADOS (4) - AH-LEU-CHA (2) - CONSTELLATION (5) - PARKER'S MOOD (5)

Charlie Parker - 1948 September 24:

PERHAPS (7) - MARMADUKE (8) - STEEPLECHASE (2) - MERRY-GO-ROUND (2)

CHARLIE PARKER - BIRD/THE SAVOY RECORDINGS (MASTER TAKES) - SAVOY 2201

2-record set

This contains one take of each of the above pieces.

Arista/Savoy have done it right (after a couple of false starts)! But first a brief history of the releases of this material:

- 1) Savoy issues the master takes and a few alternates on 78's.
- 2) Savoy issues the master takes and most of the alternates on five LP's in an unbelievably jumbled format.
- 3) English CBS/Realm (followed by other foreign licensees of Savoy) issues all the material from (2) in chronological

order on 5 LP's.

- 4) Arista/Savoy issues all the master takes in chronological order on a 2-record set (2201).
- 5) Arista/Savoy issues a single LP of alternates, and also include a couple of others on an anthology.
- 6) Arista/Savoy issues everything in chronological order in a five-record box (5500) Making all previous issues redundant (with the exception discussed below).

When recording jazz performances comprised of improvisations on a pre-composed theme, it is very common for the theme to be played imperfectly on the first takes (unless the group is exceptionally well rehearsed). The tune usually becomes perfected on subsequent takes, but at the same time the improvisations lose some of their original inspiration. One therefore often has the choice between takes with the best theme statements and those with the best improvisations. It has been most usual to choose the former even though the latter is the *raison d'etre* of the genre, since most potential record buyers would be put off by a fluffed theme statement. (This problem has been overcome since the advent of magnetic tape by splicing together the best sections of various takes - a very common procedure.)

Alto saxophonist Charlie Parker was an IMPROVISOR par excellence - so much so that he never repeated the same solo twice, even when reworking the same starting material. (Many other jazz improvisors, on the other hand, found a good solo to fit with a particular composition, then stuck with it as near as they could from memory.) This boxed set (along with all the other releases of other Parker material) also goes to prove that virtually everything he played is worth listening to. (That he was human is attested to by the few releases that feature his apparently few off musical moments.)

All of this is leading up to saying that virtually everything on this box is excellent music definitely worth listening to. Also that the best music is not always on the master takes. However, listening to repeated performances of the same composition can become tedious even when different brilliant improvisations are involved. (Wading through all the takes of PERHAPS and MARMADUKE on this box is somewhat heavy going for instance.) There thus is a use for the double album of master takes for a more casual listening session. It also makes for a much better introduction for the newcomer than having to initially plunge into the deep-ended box. In fact, the best way to appreciate the value of the alternate takes is to first become familiar with the masters.

So much has been written about this actual music that I feel unable to add anything, except to re-emphasize that this is amongst the greatest

music ever recorded. The boxed set contains a 20-page booklet containing a very fine detailed analysis of the music and the recording sessions by James Patrick, as well as an interview with Teddy Reig (the producer of most of the sessions) which sheds some very interesting background light.

The material new to this issue ranges from a two-note take of PARKER'S MOOD to about half of the 1944 Tiny Grimes date. This transitional session featuring elements of both Swing and Bebop has always been a favorite of mine, and I am particularly glad to have all of it together at long last. The rest of the music is top notch Bebop that also features much superb work by trumpeter Miles Davis and drummer Max Roach - both then in the progress of getting their music to maturity. The session under Davis' leadership has the additional interest of being one of Parker's two recorded sessions on tenor saxophone - he reveals himself to be the original inspiration behind Sonny Rollins.

(These Arista/Savoy issues do not include the Slim Gaillard date with Parker that was included on the earlier reissues. This session along with a couple of previously unissued alternates as available on a Danish Storyville record that contains the other Parker-less Gaillard session originally made for BelTone.)

So Arista/Savoy really have done it right - this double album and quintuple box should satisfy everyone. Not surprisingly, they are not being so thorough with all of the old Savoy material - in many cases, not even the master takes are worth hearing! But these Charlie Parker sides definitely deserve the treatment they have eventually received, and they definitely deserve to be owned by anyone interested in music.

(A minor historical footnote: The tune MILESTONES on the 1947 Miles Davis session is not the same as the better known one first heard on his 1958 MILESTONES album on CBS. The latter tune was given the same name owing to a clerical error. It was intended to be called SID'S AHEAD, while the tune on the CBS album that was given that name was previously known as WIERDO. Some clerical errors live on forever!

LEO ROWSOME - CLASSICS OF IRISH PIPING VOL 1 - TOPIC 12T259

HMV 1937-8:

KISS THE MAID BEHIND THE BARREL / TOUCH ME IF YOU DARE - TOP OF THE CORK ROAD / THE IRISH WASHERWOMAN - BOOLAVOGUE / THE OLD BOG ROAD - THE BOYS OF WEXFORD / KELLY THE BOY FROM KILLANE - BOIL THE BREAKFAST EARLY / THE HEATHER BREEZE - SAVOURNEEN DEELISH / CLARE'S DRAGOONS - THE BLACKBIRD - ST PATRICK'S DAY

Columbia 1926:

RIGHTS OF MAN / WEXFORD / DUNPHY'S - THE BROOM / STAR OF MUNSTER / THE MILLINER'S DAUGHTER - DAY DREAMS / THE LOW BACKED CAR - KITTY'S RAMBLES / DONNYBROOK FAIR / THE BUTCHER'S MARCH

HMV 1944:

THE PLAINS OF BOYLE / BANTRY BAY HORNPIPE - THE COLLIER'S REEL /
THE SLIGO MAID

WILLIAM ANDREWS / LIAM WALSH - CLASSICS OF IRISH PIPING VOL 2 - TOPIC
12T262

Walsh - HMV 1924-6:

THE PORTLAW REEL - THE FAITHFUL BROWN COW - BILLY TAYLOR'S FANCY -
THE GARDEN OF DAISIES - THE BANKS OF THE SUIR - THE MOUNTAIN LARK
/ DAN McCARTHY'S FANCY - THE CLIFFS OF MOHER / SADDLE THE PONY

Andrews - Parlophone 1928-30:

YELLOW JOHN / KITTY'S RAMBLES - SPEED THE PLOUGH / JOHNNY GORMAN -
ASK MY FATHER / THE MOUNTAIN LARK - MAY DAY / THE CUCKOO'S NEST -
SMASH THE WINDOWS / ROCKY ROAD TO DUBLIN - BONNY KATE / THE FIRST
HOUSE OF CONNAUGHT - MUNSTER BUTTERMILK

LEO ROWSOME - CLASSICS OF IRISH PIPING VOL 3 - TOPIC 12T322

REX 1936:

GILLIAN'S APPLES / THE MAID OF TRAMORE - THE INDEPENDENT HORNPIPE
/ THE STAR HORNPIPE - THE FAIRY REVELS / I WON'T BE A NUN - THE
BUNCH OF KEYS / BUCKLEY'S FANCY - THE COOK IN THE KITCHEN /
RAKES OF KILDARE - JOCKEY TO THE FAIR

REX 1948:

HIGGIN'S HORNPIPE / THE QUEEN OF MAY - THE FRIEZE BREECHES -
TOMORROW MORNING / THE CLOONE HORNPIPE - THE SWEEPS HORNPIPE /
THE FRIENDLY VISIT - MY DARLING ASLEEP / THE TONGUES OF FIRE -
BRIAN O'LYNN / THE NEWLY MARRIED COUPLE

Imperial 1933:

A NATION ONCE AGAIN / THE BOLD FENIAN MAN / FAINNE GEAL AN LAC -
SHANDON BELLS / HASTE TO THE WEDDING

Winner 1925:

SNOWY BREASTED PEARL - ROCKY ROAD TO DUBLIN

Most people's knowledge of bagpipes would seem to be limited to the bombastic Scottish model, even though more musical varieties can be found in just about every European country. The most complex and subtle of all must surely be the uilleann pipes of Ireland which, unlike the Scots pipes, are designed for indoor use. (Incidentally, "uilleann" is often corrupted to "union" even though it is Gaelic for elbow, the part of the body used to pump the bag.) The feature that makes the uilleann pipes unique is that in addition to the usual chanter and three drones they also have three regulators which the performer operates by wrist to produce an accompaniment of single chords. In the hands of a master musician like Leo Rowsome or Liam Walsh, the uilleann pipes can be imagined to be a harpsichord with a drone.

These three records of jigs, hornpipes, marches, reels and airs show off the pipes' qualities aimiably even though they come from old recordings. (Only the 1925-6 Rowsome's and the two 1924 Walsh's suffer from muffled sound.) The music may only consist of straightforward embellishment, but the wide variety of themes are so strong that little more need be done to them. More importantly, they are played here with such spirit and feeling that the music is as stunning as, say, a Fernando Valenti performance of a Domenico Scarlatti sonata. Certainly I never thought that any bagpipes were capable of making so much music until I heard these records. (The one letdown is the album side devoted to William Andrews who was a competent player but lacked the spirit and feel that make the performances of Rowsome and Walsh so magical.)

All of these mostly unaccompanied performances recorded in Dublin and London originally appeared on 78's, and Topic has reissued them in conjunction with their current owners, EMI (Vols 1 & 2) and Decca (Vol 3) - all three record companies should be congratulated for making this marvellous music available again.

Martin Davidson

(Topic records are imported into the USA by Rounder Distribution, 186 Willow Avenue, Somerville, MA 02144.)