

# TALKIN' ALL THAT JAZZ:

An exclusive interview with Resonance Records' **GEORGE KLABIN** and **ZEV FELDMAN**

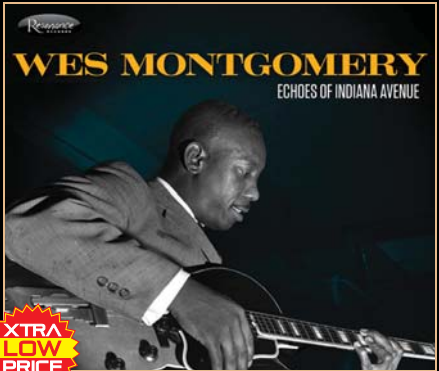
By **Stephen SPAZ Schnee**



**R**esonance Records is a label like no other. Not since the heady days of the DIY explosion in the late '70s has there been a record label built upon such immense passion and respect for the artists on their roster and the music they release. And not since the '60s has there been a Jazz label whose name is synonymous with quality. No matter what subgenre of Jazz you are into, Resonance Records will satisfy your craving for something special and exciting. Just one visit to their website ([www.resonancerecords.org](http://www.resonancerecords.org)) will introduce you to the sights and sounds of their very special releases... but be prepared to stay awhile because there is so much to peruse, to view, to listen to and to enjoy.

The non-profit label's roster of up-and-coming talent is impressive. From the amazing violin work of Christian Howes to the cool vocal stylings of Kathy Kosins, Resonance Records offers up the finest Jazz talent from around the world. From Romanian pianist Marian Petrescu to Swedish guitarist Andreas Oberg, there is so much to explore on the label's releases. While these names may not be instantly familiar to you now, they are artists that will inspire and move you.

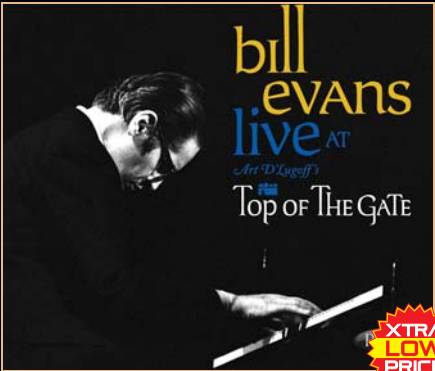
While the label prides itself on discovering new talent to introduce to the world, their exclusive releases from Jazz music's past have earned the label a lot of attention lately.



**Wes Montgomery**  
**Echoes of Indiana Avenue**  
**CD #724101961625 \$11.39**  
**2-LP #724101961311 \$29.59**

Releases from bassist Scott LaFaro, guitarist Wes Montgomery and trumpet maestro Freddie Hubbard have set the stage for perhaps their most ambitious release of all: Bill Evans Live At Art D'Lugoff's Top Of The Gate, a stunning two CD release that contains two complete sets recorded and mixed live on October 23rd, 1968. Both of these shows are completely unreleased and were brilliantly recorded by Resonance's founder and president George Klabin. Not only is the sound quality amazing, the packaging equals the music contained on the two discs (or three vinyl LPs). With loads of different essays by a variety of journalists, the booklet contains rare photos and memorabilia including Evans' original contract! From the moment you unwrap this piece of history, you are escorted back to a time when Jazz was all grown up and as electrifying as anytime before or since. It is a stunning package worthy of the accolades it has received already.

Stephen SPAZ Schnee was able to sit down and discuss this new archive release and Resonance Records' history with George Klabin and general manager Zev Feldman...



**Bill Evans**  
**Live At Art D'Lugoff's Top of the Gate**  
**2-CD #724101961526 \$15.39**  
**3-LP #724101961410 \$51.89**

**“We devoted time and attention that no other label would be able to.”**  
*—Zev Feldman*

**SPAZ:** You've just released an amazing live recording by Jazz pianist Bill Evans entitled Live At Art D'Lugoff's Top Of The Gate. How are you feeling about this release and everything you've accomplished with the label so far?

**ZEV FELDMAN:** It's been really exciting. It's really been a commitment. Three years ago, we started having conversations about how we really wanted to get into the classic Jazz market and try to find stuff that's never been out before. We were very lucky. We stayed the course. In 2010, Michael Cuscuna from Blue Note and Mosaic Records called us and said he had these Wes Montgomery tapes and wanted to know if we wanted to get them from him... and we did. We released Echoes Of Indiana Avenue and that really opened the door for us in many ways. When I started on the project, I told George that there has only been one book ever written about Wes. I said that this is an opportunity for us to go out to do everything we can to make the most compelling packages that can ever be assembled. We were very lucky. The family had photographs; we hired every liner note writer that you can imagine. We found this book that was in the process of being written by Wes' brother, Buddy Montgomery, until he died, which had all this insight that no one would have ever seen. And we found this rare interview with Wes' brother, Monk Montgomery, from 1980. Not to mention we licensed photographs... We worked for months and months just on the package. We devoted time and attention that no other label would be able to. We make a commitment to these kinds of projects. The same thing happened with Bill Evans. We went through all the necessary steps. I really wanted to make one of the best Bill Evans projects that's ever been done. The music is fantastic.

**GEORGE KLABIN:** We have two distinct areas that we are succeeding in. One of them is to find truly important classic Jazz that's never been released before. With our expertise in sound restoration, we strive to create the best possible sound for our classic line, which we call our Heirloom Series. We have four important releases in this series. Besides Bill Evans, we have titles from Wes Montgomery, Scott LaFaro and Freddie Hubbard. The Scott LaFaro release is important because it contains the Bill Evans interview I did on Scott LaFaro when I was in college. And then you have a 20 minute peek into the intimate way that Bill Evans worked. In 1960, he was rehearsing "My Foolish Heart" with Scott in his home. He put on a microphone and a recorder and he let it run for 22 minutes. You actually get to hear how he's developing the tune with Scott LaFaro. This is unique. In the entire history of Bill Evans, nobody has ever released anything like this publicly. This is how he worked. This is fascinating and historically important. In this world right now, record companies keep digging into their vaults and re-releasing and putting together new collections to resell material that has been paid for, material that they have the rights to. What we're doing is we are going out and finding material, wherever it may be, negotiating the rights... We pay everyone involved from the beginning to the end of getting this thing out. Sometimes, there's a record label; obviously, there are musicians and estates; sometimes even other interested parties that are necessary to compensate. We do that. We are able to consider anything based solely on the quality, rarity and importance of this historical music. We have this enormous potential library to look at, but only a small amount will be released because of our criteria. But that's only one side of our label.

**SPAZ:** What inspired you to set up Resonance in the first place? And how does the label's non-profit status make it different from other labels, jazz or otherwise?

**GEORGE:** I founded the Rising Jazz Stars Foundation in 2005 with the goal of supporting living musicians who were having a very difficult time getting performances and getting records released because they were not famous. These are the finest musicians that have either not been recognized officially or are young and coming up. I call them 'virtuosos', because that's all I work with. Having had a very long history with Jazz, humbly, I think I can recognize when somebody is an extraordinary Jazz musician. Then, in 2007, I decided to start a label because I was so

frustrated. I would produce them in a private studio, pay substantial amounts to get the best musicians to accompany them... but then nobody would want to put it out because they were unknown. That's why I started Resonance Records. Our mandate is to support and work with these types of musicians forever. But I realize that the historical releases are very important as well and will also generate sales which would help support our organization. That's how we got into the historical releases... and I had these tapes, so it was perfect. The Scott LaFaro was the first to come out because I've had this tape in my possession since 1966.

**SPAZ:** Your releases feature artists from all over the world, such as Italian pianist Dado Moroni, Sweden's Andreas Oberg, Romania's Marian Petrescu and others. After all these years as a Jazz fan, do you still find yourself searching for great music that you may have missed first time around... as well as new artists?

**GEORGE:** I am trying to live in the moment and that means I need to be open to the next moment. The big problem with most record labels is they have to put out music that there is a reasonable chance that they will sell 50,000 copies. We don't do that. We say that if this is an extraordinary artist, let's put it out. We are always looking, but there are some limits. We get a lot of submissions, but 99 out of 100 we can't do for some reason or another. But if somebody



is working and out there playing... like Christian Howes on violin. He is the quintessential great Jazz artist but he is playing an instrument that is unfortunately not appreciated sufficiently in Jazz. It's like the flute: people don't really listen to a lot of good Jazz flute and violin and that's partly because there aren't many great players on those instruments. Christian goes out and he works like crazy. He's building a name and this is how you get known. We need people that are doing that as well as being extraordinary virtuosos. We are not nearly as interested in putting out somebody who sells a lot of records but who isn't on the level we are looking for just so we can sell records. That's not our mandate.

**ZEV:** George is always involved in the production of the artist's records. That's something that is really consistent with us. George comes up with concepts and tries to find ways to pull from within these artists to get them to recognize the best recordings that they can make. George finds them. He sometimes spends time on YouTube! (laughs) He's very plugged in and he's been very aggressive. It's because of George that we are here. He's a passionate guy and I'm a passionate guy. We were sitting down at a table somewhere around three months ago and he said, "You know, that's why you and I get along so well... because we love this music!" We are not selling shoes Bic pens or any kind of widgets: it's music. It's been a passion for him his whole life and it's been a passion for me. We've got a great responsibility here and an opportunity and foundation to do something will all this music. We've got our work cut out for us but we love it.

**SPAZ:** In regards to Bill Evans, there's been such an influx

*Interview*  
**EXCLUSIVE**

of unauthorized product over the years that were not endorsed by the estate. Was it difficult to deal with the estate?

**GEORGE:** Not at all. And the reason it wasn't is because who we are: we are non-profit, we are sincere, and we are reasonable, open and respectful. These are the qualities you don't find in Jazz record labels. You might find it in the larger labels, but they aren't going to be necessarily interested in this. The little labels have reputations that vary. Certain labels in Europe will just put stuff out and they don't pay anybody. Another thing is we are known for our packaging. Do you know how much time, effort and money it takes to do that? Nobody wants to do that anymore! I'm one of the few owners of a label that is willing to do that. There are a few others, but the difference with us is our historical stuff. We occupy a very deep little niche that other people don't want to step into because it's too risky, it's too expensive. Mainstream Jazz is going through a really difficult period, as it has for a long time. It's been an up and down thing since the '70s in my opinion. We want to keep it alive and we want to let people know that if you want to hear some really exciting mainstream Jazz, then go to our website and listen and buy the records. You'll be moved, you'll be transported. Isn't it wonderful to discover something of a high quality in art? That is what we are hoping people will do. I want to put out stuff that will last forever. It's all going to be legacy stuff. I tell that to the artists... "I'm going to produce legacy stuff that you're going to be proud of."

**SPAZ:** What makes this Bill Evans piece so different from other releases?

**ZEV:** It's the only recording that Bill Evans made at the Village Gate. A lot of people may not realize that Bill Evans played the Village Gate four months a year at that club but no records were ever made there. There are several songs on here that he recorded with the trio for the very first time. This was the first documented recording that was ever done with this group and it was the first week that Marty Morell (drums) was in the group. And it's very interesting to know that George, who made this recording, was a 21 year old engineer who had the gumption at the time to say, "You know what? I like it when you put microphones right up on the musicians. I get a better mix that way." And he did it and he mixed it live. He had a microphone inside the bass, he had a microphone inside the piano and he had two mikes on the drums. It gives you a feeling that you are right up front and personal at the club.

**SPAZ:** What's next for Resonance Records?

**ZEV:** We have a lot of things in the works right now. It's just amazing what goes into making these projects possible. It took two years for Wes; it took two years for Bill Evans!

**GEORGE:** We have a wonderful recording from Tommy Flanagan and Jaki Byard. A live duet that is very rare. It was in the '80s and they were both at the peak of their powers. We have other things in the fire but for every 10, we put out one and we just keep adding stuff. The packaging, the history and the research is always at the highest level. It's like a book! We publish books with music rather than just a record. It's an issue of respect for the artist. We make collectables.

**THANKS TO**  
George Klabin and Zev Feldman

**SPECIAL THANKS TO**  
Virginia Papaia, Jocelynn Pryor and Craig Swedin.



[www.resonancerecords.org](http://www.resonancerecords.org)

© 2012 Allegro Media Group. All Rights Reserved.