

---

Jazz

# Bill Evans: Live at Art D'Lugoff's Top of the Gate

By **Jeff Simon**

Published: June 1, 2012, 12:00 AM

0 Comments

Recommend { 4

Updated: June 1, 2012, 6:16 PM

One of the great jazz discoveries of the year—now and, for certain, when the year is finished six months from now (unless, of course, the Mayan calendar gets us first, in which case it'll be too bad that all music disappeared, don't you think?).

What is instantly so remarkable about this previously unheard 1968 live performance from The Top of the Gate is fledgling engineer George Klabin's recorded sound which, as producer Zev Feldman says (with little hyperbole), makes these recordings "among the best sounding Evans recordings ever made." In addition, writes Feldman, "the performances contain some of the greatest playing ever documented by this trio."

Writes Gary Burton in his contribution to the disc's inspiringly thorough notes "it was so good it gave me goosebumps and made the hair on the back of my neck stand up."

Evans' bassist here is Eddie Gomez, his greatest bassist since Scott LeFaro and two years into his 11-year Evans gig, and his drummer is Marty Morrell, who was new to the group and may not have played with the freedom of Paul Motian (few drummers ever did) but was perfect for Evans in this era.

While Evans was playing at the Top of the Gate, Thelonious Monk and Charles Lloyd split the bill on the floor below.

Since that precocious sound engineer eventually became the president of Resonance Records, his company was in a position to present this previously unheard music as if it were the utter treasure that it is. There's a generous supply of photos with notes by Gomez and Morell as well as Burton, producer Feldman and the venerable annotator Nat Hentoff (who quotes, perhaps, the definitive poetic description of Bill Evans' music by the late critic Gene Lees that it "sounds like love letters written to the world from some prison of the heart").

It is one of the soggiest myths of jazz opinionengineering that there's something crude about final period Evans captured live. What you're hearing in that case from that Evans is the burn of a musician who knows he won't be around very much longer and is getting as much in as possible.

This, from almost a decade earlier, is the fully mature Evans, sometimes absolutely astonishing in the sort of virtuosic digital velocity which was so seldom his thing. This is the modest but confident musician to whom other musicians would routinely make pilgrimages just to warm themselves by the creative fire.

It's a privilege to hear it presented this well for the first time.

-----

Bill Evans: Live at Art D'Lugoff's Top of the Gate

[Resonance, two discs]

4 stars

---

## Comments

There are no comments on this story.

Add your comment

## ADVERTISER INDEX

Copyright 1999 - 2012 - The Buffalo News copyright-protected material.