

# JAKI BYARD

## *Blues for Smoke*

JAKI BYARD (piano)

The multi-talented Jaki Byard was born on June 15th 1922 in Worcester, Mass. His father played baritone horn in a Marching Band and his mother was a pianist. This musical background led to Jaki studying classical piano at an early age and subsequently to appearances at the local Boys' Club. By the time he was sixteen years old, he was working professionally, one of his first jobs being with the local Freddie Bates Band and incredibly he had soon arranged BODY AND SOUL - made popular by Coleman Hawkins, for the Bates Band with four horns.

Eventually Jaki mastered trumpet, trombone, saxophone, guitar and drums as well as the piano which was to become his main instrument. After service in the Army from 1941 to 1946, he moved to Boston playing jobs there on alto with the Louis Perry Group and then joining the Earl Bostic Band on piano in the late forties. The fifties found Byard still in Boston where he worked as a solo pianist at the Stable Club whilst playing saxophone in the Herb Pomeroy Band as well as composing and arranging. A stint with the

Maynard Ferguson Band on piano brought Jaki to the attention of the jazz cognoscenti and soon he began recording as a solo artist.

Jaki Byard left the Ferguson Band in October 1961, moved to New York and soon found himself part of the volatile Charles Mingus Ensemble. His pianistic virtuosity vitalized and coloured the band all the way through and can be heard to good advantage on several live albums recorded with Mingus, in particular those from Monterey and Paris.

There are really countless jazz pianists in this world, but how many could be called "great" jazz pianists? Earl Hines, Fats Waller, Tatum, Monk, Bud Powell, Tristano and Bill Evans certainly. They were all geniuses and virtuosos who had the creativity and power of expression peculiar to them as individuals, and all of them were capable of totally representing themselves in solo performances. Whilst Byard is not an innovator in the grand mould, he is truly a great pianist in the real sense, able to interpret and expand musical thought in a totally individual way and with this collection of his own compositions Jaki reconfirms his

unique talent and deep feeling for the whole kaleidoscope of jazz piano styles.

The first two pieces are from his **DANCE SUITE** comprising six movements based on impressions of Europe. **THE HOLLIS STOMP** (originally called **MR. PIANO MAN**) referred to in the title of the first piece, is named for the section of Queens from whence Jaki started out on his travels. Jaki's waltz, **MILAN TOLYON** is a clever juxtaposition of the European classical style with jazz "train" rhythms. The reflective **ALUMINUM BABY** (a near relative of **SATIN DOLL**) was written for the Herb Pomeroy Band during Jaki's Boston period. **PETE AND THOMAS** (subtitled **TRIBUTE TO THE TICKLERS**) reflects his great respect for tradition in jazz music with more than a nod in the direction of Pete Johnson, Willie the Lion, Luckey Roberts, Thomas "Fats" Waller and James P. Johnson. **SPANISH TINGE No. 1** dedicated to Jelly Roll Morton, appeared subsequently on one of Jaki's Prestige albums.

Jaki is in a somewhat Garner-ish mode on **FLIGHT OF THE FLY** with interesting effects created by his unusual way of using the left and right hands. **BLUES FOR SMOKE** has a marvellous 'after hours' feel building gradually with a succession of crashing bass chords. **JAKI'S BLUES NEXT** is played at breakneck speed with contrasting use of piano styles and featuring very effective use of discords in the manner of Cecil Taylor. **DIANE'S MELODY** is probably Jaki Byard's best known composition. In the early fifties he recorded this tune with Charlie Mariano for the Imperial label and Serge Chaloff, the baritone virtuoso, also picked up this piece for his album 'Boston Blow Up'. One of the best cuts on the album, with great depth of feeling. **ONE, TWO, FIVE** brings out all of Jaki's resources and formidable technique, his swing power taking him effortlessly through a *tour de force* embracing bebop, ragtime, stride and avant garde – all in less than three minutes!

This then, is a breathtaking recital by a supremely gifted, multi-faceted musician,

well worth waiting for since its recording some twenty eight years ago! On the original session tapes **THE HOLLIS STOMP** was recorded under the working title of **MR. PIANO MAN**. How apt that original title was can be judged from this remarkable solo piano album.

Alan Bates

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1. **EXCERPTS FROM EUROPEAN EPISODE**
    - a) **JOURNEY / HOLLIS STOMP**
    - b) **MILAN TOLYON**(Byard) . . . . . Time: 5'57
  2. **ALUMINUM BABY**  
(Byard) . . . . . Time: 4'32
  3. **PETE AND THOMAS**  
(**TRIBUTE TO THE TICKLERS**)  
(Byard) . . . . . Time: 3'41
  4. **SPANISH TINGE No. 1**  
(Byard) . . . . . Time: 4'12
  5. **FLIGHT OF THE FLY**  
(Byard) . . . . . Time: 5'44
  6. **BLUES FOR SMOKE**  
(Byard) . . . . . Time: 4'52
  7. **JAKI'S BLUES NEXT**  
(Byard) . . . . . Time: 2'07
  8. **DIANE'S MELODY**  
(Byard) . . . . . Time: 5'05
  9. **ONE TWO FIVE**  
(Byard) . . . . . Time: 2'40

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Recorded at Nola Penthouse Studios,  
New York City, 16th December 1960

Engineering: Bob d'Orleans  
Supervision: Nat Hentoff  
Album production: Alan Bates  
Design: Malcolm Walker

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Printed and made in West Germany