Bill Evans With Philly Joe Jones – Green Dolphin Street (1959/62)

01. You And Me And The Music 02. My Heart Stood Still 03. Green Dolphin Street 04. How Am I To Know? 05. Woody'N Tou (Take 1) play 06. Woody'N Tou (Take 2) 07. Loose Bloose Personnel: Tracks 01-06 Bill Evans – piano Paul Chambers – bass Philly Joe Jones – drums Track 07 Bill Evans – piano Zoot Sims – tenor saxophone Jim Hall – guitar Ron Carter – Bass Philly Joe Jones – drums

This obscure Bill Evans trio set (with bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Philly Joe Jones) went unissued until the mid-'70s when the pianist decided that it was worth releasing as a fine example of bassist Chambers' work. Very much a spontaneous set (recorded after the rhythm section made part of a record accompanying trumpeter Chet Baker), the group runs through a few standards such as "You and the Night and the Music," "Green Dolphin Street," and two versions of "Woody 'N You." Although lacking the magic of Evans' regular bands, this CD reissue has its strong moments and the pianist's fans will be interested in getting the early sampling of his work. A special bonus is the rare first take of "All of You" from the legendary Village Vanguard engagement by the 1961 Evans Trio (with bassist Scott LaFaro and drummer Paul Motian). ---Scott Yanow, allmusic.com

The timing of this album, I suspect, accounts for Bill Evans' relatively upbeat lyricism. It was recorded in January 1959, shortly after Evans had left Miles Davis and two months before he would subsequently return for the recording dates that would comprise "Kind of Blue." Evans' playing here may reflect a sense of relief and newfound freedom (Davis, after all, could be a handful on a daily basis).

So much for conjecture. For whatever reason, there is a "looseness," an openness, maybe even a sense of playfulness, in Evans' work on the majority of this album's cuts as Evans leads two former Davis colleagues through a series of standards. There are no inroads here, no profound explorations, to be sure; this is simply three excellent jazz practitioners doing what they do best.

The title cut, "On Green Dolphin Street," deserves a bit of discussion. At first blush, of course, it's more than slightly reminiscent of the Davis Sextet's earlier recording; so much so that you may find yourself waiting for Davis or Adderley or Coltrane to come in for a chorus. (It should also be noted that Jones' drumwork suffers -- on this cut alone -- by comparison with the earlier version in that he isn't called upon to vary his approach with each successive soloist.) What elevates this version, of course, is Evans' extended passages with their subtle shifts from one chorus to the next.

As noted, there is no new ground broken with this recording, and that's fine. "On Green Dolphin Street" chronicles Bill Evans at a particular transitional period in his career. It also provides some mighty fine listening. --- Paul Dana (San Francisco, CA USA)

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