

Palais des Beaux Arts 1963
Thelonious Monk (Tidal Waves Music)
 by Duck Baker

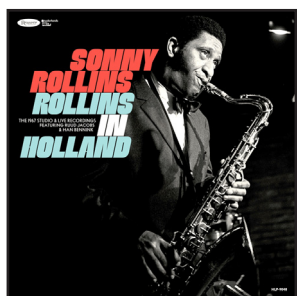
This excellent release went somewhat unnoticed, owing in part to the attention given to the nearly contemporaneous appearance of *Palo Alto* last year, but Monk fans will find this previously unissued date extremely rewarding in its own right, provided they can find it at all; it came out as a limited-release LP and may already be hard to track down.

The concert was recorded in Brussels during a European tour that Monk nearly didn't make (he complained that his hand hurt and had to be enticed out of bed on the day of departure). It was among the last recordings of what we could call the first edition of the "classic" Monk quartet with tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse, bassist John Ore and drummer Frankie Dunlop. *Palo Alto*, though few reviewers mentioned the fact, seems to be the very last recording of the last classic lineup. In both cases the group was very comfortable with the material they played night after night, but still inspired by it and finding new ways to expand on it.

Dunlop is the big difference maker between the first and later classic lineups. A unique stylist who combined the driving swing of the big band era and the unpredictable accents of bebop, Dunlop is considered by many the perfect drummer for Monk. Not that Ben Riley wasn't an entirely worthy successor; the latter's more subtle touch added crucial shading to some of the group's greatest recordings (*Live At The It Club*, e.g.), but Dunlop did have something special and we really hear it at Palais des Beaux Arts. He even gets an unaccompanied solo track.

The sound quality is excellent and that makes it a perfect companion to the superb 2018 Gearbox release *Monk*, which was recorded in Copenhagen four days earlier. Even the fact that "Bye Ya" and "Monk's Dream" were played at both concerts is a plus, since the performances are so utterly different.

For more information, visit tidalwavesmusic.com



Rollins in Holland
Sonny Rollins (Resonance)
 by Stuart Broomer

Rollins in Holland, available as a three-LP or two-CD set, documents performances in May 1967 when Sonny Rollins played a series of gigs with the Dutch rhythm section of bassist Ruud Jacobs and drummer Han Bennink. It's a remarkable release for a few reasons. In the late '60s, Rollins wasn't making trips to recording studios: *East Broadway Run Down* was recorded a year before and *Next Album* would only come in 1972. If Rollins wasn't making official statements, however, he was still practicing his spontaneous art at a consummate level. Rollins has had few creative peers in jazz and his gifts as an improviser included an unmatched melodic

flow, a continuously inventive line peppered with myriad shifts and accents and propelled by a force that made him as much rhythm section as soloist.

The material, presented in reverse chronological order, opens with a radio studio set of short performances of modern jazz and Broadway standards, which could have made up one side of a standard LP of the day. Rollins is a towering presence and the tunes assume forms at once personal and perfect. Jacobs and Bennink, who together represented the poles of Dutch jazz—Jacobs a modernist traditionalist, Bennink the quintessential anarchist avant-gardist—were also the country's finest rhythm team, regular accompanists to touring mainstream masters like Johnny Griffin, Dexter Gordon and Clark Terry. For Jacobs and Bennink alike, Rollins, straddling the divide, was a special inspiration.

Televised evening takes from that last night begin to stretch, the live audience and unrestrained lengths amplifying Rollins' fluid creativity and encouraging Bennink's rambunctiously precise explosions. The last two LPs then chronicle the group's first club performance two nights before at Academie voor Beeldende Kunst Arnhem. Tunes that appear in refined form on the later dates—Rollins standbys like "Four" and "Sonny Moon for Two"—stretch into improvised odysseys, intense or playful by turn, with Rollins sometimes interpolating other tunes or just changing tack completely, all in relation to the moment's dialogue.

Rollins in Holland is at once heroic and joyous music-making that links hardbop and free jazz. It's both testimony to Rollins' singular genius and a harbinger of upcoming developments in Dutch music as well: Bennink and saxophonist Willem Breuker's *New Acoustic Swing Duo*, the first masterpiece of New Dutch Swing, was made just six months later. The sound isn't particularly good. High frequencies are thin on the live material and even the studio recordings suffer a certain excess of echo, but if sound quality impacts your listening to great jazz, you'll miss half of it and the sound here is infinitely better than Charlie Parker's *Bird at St. Nick's*.

For more information, visit resonancerecords.org



Cherry Jam
Don Cherry (Gearbox)
 by Pierre Crépon

Unfortunately, garbage is the word for a large part of the product sold using Don Cherry's name lately. The formula is simple: download a radio session that has circulated for years, slap terrible typography on a random Google Images search result and order a vinyl run. With this product that literally anyone could put together, shell entities named Alternative Fox, Lepo Glasbo, Hi Hat and 'unaware' resellers have to be thanked for making the market for proper archival releases even more impracticable than it already was.

Therefore, a cover housing actually uncirculated Cherry music and featuring licensing credits is a welcome sight. *Cherry Jam*, a 12" record played at 45 RPM, contains a short 1965 session from the archives of Denmark's national public radio. Those 20 minutes of music are divided between three Cherry originals and a standard. The trumpeter is the guest of a local quartet made up of pianist Atli Bjørn, tenor saxophonist Mogens Bollerup, bassist Benny Nielsen and drummer Simon Koppel. The era could suggest avant garde

playing, but the music is in a traditional bop format.

For reasons unknown, this release gives October 1965 as the recording date although Danmarks Radio archives place the session on Feb. 2nd, 1965. The few months in between mattered much in Cherry's career. In Europe, following a quartet tour with Albert Ayler's greatest formation, he would assemble in Paris the band with whom he made his first major mark as leader, playing the fast-paced suites made up of myriad themes segueing into each other heard on his classic *Complete Communion*.

Until then, working with Ornette Coleman or Sonny Rollins, Cherry had rarely recorded his own compositions. Hearing them outside of the suite context is in retrospect where *Cherry Jam's* main interest lies, as the musicians play competently but without reaching fascinating heights. *Cherry Jam* may ultimately be valuable more for what it is not than what it is, showing how the form of Cherry's music needed the radical evolution it would soon undergo truly to take flight. Cherry's '60s work deserves the most complete and qualitative documentation possible, just what Gearbox Records has helped accomplish.

For more information, visit doncherrymusic.bandcamp.com



The Lost Berlin Tapes
Ella Fitzgerald (Verve)
 by Kurt Gottschalk

The thing with newly uncovered Ella Fitzgerald live recordings is that while there are unlikely to be revelations, a listen or two is sure to turn up a gem and a few more runs through will lead to the realization that every track is a gem. While the singer's performance career is quite well captured and catalogued at this point, the truth of the matter is that she wasn't an artist to give anything less than her all (even after learning between sets that her sister had died, as happened in 1966 at the Jazz à Juan festival on the French Riviera, where she was appearing with the Duke Ellington Orchestra). Her concerts were infused with joy and it's hard to imagine anyone not feeling it come through.

The Lost Berlin Tapes was recorded two years after her much acclaimed and Grammy Hall of Fame-inducted *Ella in Berlin: Mack the Knife*, but its release clearly trades off of that beloved title. Guitarist Jim Hall didn't make the trip this time and Stan Levey replaces Gus Johnson on drums. Pianist Paul Smith, then, becomes the star player in what was likely one of Fitzgerald's least distinguished bands, rounded out by bassist Wilfred Middlebrooks. Smith had been working with the singer for four years at the time of the Berlin return engagement and would continue to work with her for another 20 years. He's a solid player and occasionally shines—he slices time convincingly on "Takin' a Chance on Love"—but the date is clearly Fitzgerald's. The audience was there for her and the band is not about to get in the way.

Other gems include rockin' takes on "Here Comes Charlie" and "The Jersey Bounce" and a lovely "My Kind of Boy". There are hits, of course—"Cheek to Cheek", "I Won't Dance", "Summertime" and, of course, "Mack the Knife". *The Lost Berlin Tapes* isn't an essential Fitzgerald title, but there won't be a moment you're sorry that you're listening.

For more information, visit vervemusicgroup.com