

VE-2-2523



A TWO
RECORD
SET

THE
VERVE YEARS
(1952-54)

CHARLIE PARKER

The third and final chronological volume of Parker's complete Verve masters, including four brilliant small-group sessions, and works with strings, big band and voices.



You know," Parker once told Leonard Feather, "it used to be so cruel to the musicians, just the way it is today—they say when Beethoven was on his deathbed, he shook his fist at the world; they just didn't understand."

The definitive Parker biography remains to be written, and I, for one, have always felt that the task requires the range of perspectives which Erik Erikson brought *Young Man Luther* and *Gandhi's Truth*. Like Erikson's dynamic subjects, Parker was a complex and creative figure; his life story was often brutal. He hardly knew his father, a mysterious and perhaps shady character, yet he was fond of calling early idol Buster Smith "Dad." His mother, industrious, loving and totally devoted to her only child, remained close to Bird until his death and encouraged a shift of interests from medicine to music (and, concomitantly, from academic achievement to truancy) by buying her son an alto sax when he was 13. Kansas City, Missouri, where Parker grew up, was the home of several important groups, particularly the Count Basie Band with Lester Young. Parker absorbed all the music he could in his early teens, got laughed off more than one bandstand, and finally reached a first level of maturity in 1937, at 17, after a summer of woodshedding in the Ozarks. By this time Parker had also acquired a heroin habit and the first of four wives.

During the next five years Parker worked on the road with Jay McShann and other bands, perfecting ideas first uncovered while jamming in a New York chili parlor in 1939 into a technically commanding, rhythmically unpredictable and harmonically refined style, a style fully formed when he moved permanently to New York in 1943.

Quickly acknowledged as an overwhelming presence and the most radical innovator in jazz history, Parker presided over the bebop revolution of the mid-40's. His Savoy and Dial recordings, made between 1945 and '48, became the source material for an entire generation and, in general, were unaffected by the personal demons that put him into California's Camarillo State Hospital for eight months in 1946-7.

In 1948, he became affiliated with producer Norman Granz. Although their ensuing collaborations were loudly criticized by critics and serious fans as contrived commercialism (at least in the case of the strings, it was an opportunity Parker both approved and appreciated), the saxophonist continued to turn in brilliant performances (the first two volumes in this series, VE-2-2501 and 2512, document his work). By 1952, however, production concepts were beginning to run thin; consequently, the eight sessions on this album have

lapses not found in the early Parker combo recordings or the first sessions with Granz. Most of the problems, it should be noted, can be attributed to Parker's surroundings, yet even when the alto solos are below his usual sublime level Parker remains clearly an emotionally gripping master. The third "Bird with Strings" studio session opens the album, with arranger Joe Lippman (who also did the July, 1950 string date) also using a big band. I found Lippman's writing both overwrought ("Temptation") and overly bland (the two concluding ballads), and he wastes the superb "Autumn in New York" by giving Parker insufficient blowing room. Parker improves matters considerably with funky repose at the end of "Temptation" and two solos on "Lover," a descending chord cycle made for harmonic supermen which Bird meets by spinning new melodies without becoming trapped in the seesaw chordal motion. The alto tone is noticeably thicker than on earlier recordings. Bill Harris (of Woody Herman fame) is the featured trombonist, Lou Stein the pianist, and trumpet solos are probably the work of Bernie Previn.

Five days later another concept was repeated. Walter Bishop, Jr., Teddy Kotick and Machito conga drummer Luis Miranda had participated in the first "Charlie Parker Plays South of the Border" session 10 months earlier, and old associates Max Roach and "Little Benny" Harris make the group a sextet. Adding congas to a jazz rhythm section became popular later in the decade; here the concept is fairly new and Roach and Miranda cook individually without really connecting. The choice of material suggests a lowest-common-denominator approach to Latin music which effects even Parker (his "Estrellita" theme statement could be parody, but probably isn't), and Benny Harris sounds ragged and frail throughout. Most of the alto work is on another level, especially the jaunty "Mama Inez" and "La Paloma" solos and the wonderfully loose episode in "Begin the Beguine" which features some striking lower-register dips. Bishop sounds relaxed, a gentle Bud Powell disciple who occasionally inserts some Afro-Cuban voicings.

Lippman returns, with 16-piece band in tow, two months later. At times, I find the writing obtrusive (especially on the bridge of "I Can't Get Started") and commonplace, but Parker is in excellent form throughout, from the sure execution and oblique quotes of "Night and Day" to the pensive comfort of "I Can't Get Started." Oscar Peterson is in a surprising Teddy Wilson mood on the latter, and Bill Harris displays his

wide-gauged tonal attitudes on "Almost Like Being in Love." "What is This Thing Called Love?" which contains two fine Parker solos, was a bebop favorite both under its own name and as the chordal basis for Tadd Dameron's "Hot House."

Some of the surprising song choices in the first three sessions reveal a desire for variation from more familiar harmonic sequences. The same conclusion can be drawn from the altered progressions on "The Song is You," but for the most part the material on this first quartet session is basic blues ("Laird Baird" and "Cosmic Rays") and "I Got Rhythm" ("Kim"). Encounters with a basic piano trio, minus a second horn or vocalist, are rare in the Parker discography, and the comparative simplicity of this and the second quartet date make them stand out among Parker's last recordings. Note the recording date and personnel, which have been incorrectly listed on earlier editions.

Nothing gets in the way of Parker's genius here—ideas come in flashes, effortlessly, and everything he conceives is articulated on the horn. "Laird Baird," with its quicksilver alto choruses, is enriched by the impeccable and increasingly melodic drums of Max Roach, as is the more mysterious and traditional "Cosmic Rays." As always, Hank Jones is elegant and lyrical, a model of grace without pressure. (Different versions of "Kim" and "Cosmic Rays" will appear in a future volume of alternate Parker takes.)

Perhaps the oddest format of Parker's career appeared the following May, shortly after the legendary Masey Hall concert which featured Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Powell, Charles Mingus and Roach. The latter two are present in an octet completed by Tony Aless and a woodwind quintet (playing Gil Evans arrangements), with Dave Lambert's singers thrown in for good measure. Or not so good—the vocals, when not camp, are pallid, and even Evans has a few lapses during "In the Still of the Night." Parker perseveres, indifferent to the cluttered surroundings. Ignore the corny vocal comping, and enjoy his tender passion on "Old Folks," a performance which endeared the tune to numerous modernists, and for Evans at his customary level of skill, note the backgrounds behind Aless and Roach (!) on "If I Love Again."

With the August 1953 quartet we

reach the greatest studio session of Parker's last years. "Chi Chi," a strong blues line, stresses the thickened alto tone as Parker moves between registers. The ideas in this solo are a mix of ageless licks and more personally realized blues phraseology. Al Haig has a great harmonic ear and comps with telepathic correctness, Roach is more assertive than on the earlier quartet, and Percy Heath's lovely round sound and strong time add to the exemplary rhythm section. "I Remember You" finds Parker working ideas over the changes in long ribbons with a few virtuosic touches, and "Now's the Time," more sprightly than the original 1945 recordings, is one of his most kaleidoscopic blues performances. "Confirmation," called Parker's greatest composition because of its unique chord sequence and continuous melodic development, is a wonderful collection of rhythmic shifts and inside-out turns of phrase in this, its only studio recording.

The final two sessions, from 1954, are made up entirely of Cole Porter compositions (four other Porter pieces are heard earlier in the album) and reflect Parker's physical and emotional disintegration (his daughter Pree died of pneumonia the previous year, and he would attempt suicide and spend time in Bellevue between the two sessions). The March tracks are particularly wobbly and faltering, though inferior Parker is still beyond the work of most imitators. And "Love for Sale," from December, has signs of renewed health and greater relaxation only three months before his death. The end may have been in sight, but characteristically, Parker experienced nothing so simple as a direct slide to oblivion.

"You know," Parker once told Leonard Feather, "it used to be so cruel to the musicians, just the way it is today—they say when Beethoven was on his deathbed, he shook his fist at the world; they just didn't understand." Twenty-two years after he quit shaking his fist, "the genius of Charlie Parker" has become a cliché, yet some people still don't understand. "A symbol to the Negro people? No. They don't even know him. They never heard of him and could care less," Art Blakey said.

Musically, however, Parker has been more than vindicated as his once-threatening innovations have become part of the American cultural mainstream. During Parker's lifetime, only the initiates understood—"Come with me, if you want to go to Kansas City," King Pleasure sang in his lyrics to "Parker's Mood." In 1977 the whole world understands, and Van Morrison, a rock and roll belter from Belfast, pays homage to Parker's spirit by insisting to

Musicians, cut off from the American mainstream when they began viewing themselves as artists instead of entertainers, made the separation complete by adopting their own clothing, vernacular, and bad habits."

his listeners that "You know you know the way to Kansas City." The legend of Parker's life may spread or disappear but the music will continue to generate its own legend as long as there are people to listen.

Bob Blumenthal is a jazz critic for the *Boston Phoenix*

Originally produced by Norman Granz
Reissue prepared by Robert Hurwitz
Cover art: Patricia Dryden
Art direction: Basil Pao (AGI)
Reissue engineer: Edwin Outwater
Mastering: Robert Ludwig (Masterdisk)

SIDE 1

TEMPTATION

(Freed/Brown) (675-2) 3:25 ASCAP

AUTUMN IN NEW YORK

(Duke) (677-4) 3:26 ASCAP

LOVER

(Rodgers/Hart) (676-3) 3:05 ASCAP

STELLA BY STARLIGHT

(Washington/Young) (678-4) 2:55 ASCAP

Recorded in New York City, January 22, 1952
Charlie Parker (alto saxophone), Chris Griffin, Bernie Previn, Al Porcino (trumpet), Will Bradley, Bill Harris (trombone), Toots Mondello, Murray Williams (alto saxophone), Hank Ross, Art Drelinger (tenor saxophone), Stan Webb (baritone saxophone), unknown string section, Verley Mills (harp), Lou Stein (piano), Art Ryerson (guitar), Bob Haggart (bass), Don Lamond (drums), Joe Lippman (arranger, conductor)

BEGIN THE BEGUINE

(Porter) (682-3) 3:10 ASCAP

MAMA INEZ

(Grenet) (679-4) 2:58 BMI

ESTRELLITA

(Ponce) (681-1) 2:45 P.D.

LA PALOMA

(683-1) 2:40 P.D.

LA CUCURACHA

(680-3) 2:45 P.D.

Recorded in New York City, January 23, 1952
Charlie Parker (alto saxophone), Benny Harris (trumpet), Walter Bishop (piano), Teddy Kotick (bass), Max Roach (drums)

SIDE 2

NIGHT AND DAY

(Porter) (756-5) 2:45 ASCAP

ALMOST LIKE BEING IN LOVE

(Lerner/Loewe) (758-1) 2:35 ASCAP

I CAN'T GET STARTED

(Gershwin/Duke) (759-5) 3:05 ASCAP

WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED LOVE

(Porter) (757-4) 2:35 ASCAP

Recorded in New York City, March 25, 1952
Charlie Parker (alto saxophone), Jimmy Maxwell, Carl Poole, Al Porcino, Bernie Previn (trumpet), Bill Harris, Lou McGarity, Bart Varsalona (trombone), Harry Terrill, Murray Williams (alto saxophone), Flip Phillips, Hank Ross (tenor saxophone), Danny Bank (baritone saxophone), Oscar Peterson (piano), Freddie Green (guitar), Ray Brown (bass), Don Lamond (drums), Joe Lippman (arranger, conductor)

THE SONG IS YOU

(Kern/Hammerstein) (1118-3) 2:55 ASCAP

LAIRD BAIRD

(Parker) (1119-7) 2:45 BMI

KIM

(Parker) (1120-2) 3:10 BMI

COSMIC RAYS

(Parker) (1121-2) 2:55 BMI

Recorded in New York City, December 30, 1952
Charlie Parker (alto saxophone), Hank Jones (piano), Teddy Kotick (bass), Max Roach (drums)

SIDE 3

IN THE STILL OF THE NIGHT

(Porter) (1238-7) 3:18 ASCAP

OLD FOLKS

(Hill/Robison) (1239-9) 3:33 ASCAP

IF I LOVE AGAIN

(Murray/Oakland) (1240-9) 2:23 ASCAP

Recorded in New York City, May 22, 1953
Charlie Parker (alto saxophone), Junior Collins (french horn), Hal McKusick (clarinet), Al Block (flute), Tommy Mace (oboe), Manny Thaler (bassoon), Tony Aless (piano), Charlie Mingus (bass), Max Roach (drums), Dave Lambert Singers, Gil Evans (arranger, conductor)

CHI CHI

(Parker) (1246-3) 3:01 BMI

I REMEMBER YOU

(Schertzing/Mercer) (1247-1) 3:00 ASCAP

NOW'S THE TIME

(Parker) (1248-1) 2:58 BMI

CONFIRMATION

(Parker) (1249-3) 2:55 BMI

Recorded in New York City, August 4, 1953
Charlie Parker (alto saxophone), Al Haig (piano), Percy Heath (bass), Max Roach (drums)

SIDE 4

I GET A KICK OUT OF YOU

(Porter) (1531-7) 4:50 ASCAP

JUST ONE OF THOSE THINGS

(Porter) (1532-1) 2:39 ASCAP

MY HEART BELONGS TO DADDY

(Porter) (1533-2) 3:17 ASCAP

I'VE GOT YOU UNDER MY SKIN

(Porter) (1534-1) 3:31 ASCAP

Recorded in New York City, March 31, 1954
Charlie Parker (alto saxophone), Walter Bishop (piano), Jerome Darr (guitar), Teddy Kotick (bass), Roy Haynes (drums)

LOVE FOR SALE

(Porter) (2115-5) 5:37 ASCAP

I LOVE PARIS

(Porter) (2116-3) 5:10 ASCAP

Recorded in New York City, December 10, 1954
Charlie Parker (alto saxophone), Walter Bishop (piano), Billy Bauer (guitar), Teddy Kotick (bass), Art Taylor (drums)

THE SELECTIONS:

TEMPTATION

AUTUMN IN NEW YORK

LOVER

STELLA BY STARLIGHT

Charlie Parker (alto saxophone) with big band and strings, Joe Lipman (arranger, conductor)

BEGIN THE BEGUINE

MAMA INEZ

ESTRELLITA

LA PALOMA

LA CUCURACHA

Charlie Parker (alto saxophone), Benny Harris (trumpet), Walter Bishop (piano), Teddy Kotick (bass), Max Roach (drums)

NIGHT AND DAY

ALMOST LIKE BEING IN LOVE

I CAN'T GET STARTED

WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED LOVE

Charlie Parker (alto saxophone) with big band, Joe Lipman (arranger, conductor)

THE SONG IS YOU

LAIRD BAIRD

KIM

COSMIC RAYS

Charlie Parker (alto saxophone), Hank Jones (piano), Teddy Kotick (bass), Max Roach (drums)

IN THE STILL OF THE NIGHT

OLD FOLKS

IF I LOVE AGAIN

Charlie Parker (alto saxophone), Junior Collins (french horn), Hal McKusick (clarinet), Al Block (flute), Tommy Mace (oboe), Manny Thaler (bassoon), Tony Aless (piano), Charlie Mingus (bass), Max Roach (drums), Dave Lambert Singers, Gil Evans (arranger, conductor)

CHI CHI

I REMEMBER YOU

NOW'S THE TIME

CONFIRMATION

Charlie Parker (alto saxophone), Al Haig (piano), Percy Heath (bass), Max Roach (drums)

I GET A KICK OUT OF YOU

JUST ONE OF THOSE THINGS

MY HEART BELONGS TO DADDY

I'VE GOT YOU UNDER MY SKIN

Charlie Parker (alto saxophone), Walter Bishop (piano), Jerome Darr (guitar), Teddy Kotick (bass), Roy Haynes (drums)

LOVE FOR SALE

I LOVE PARIS

Charlie Parker (alto saxophone), Walter Bishop (piano), Billy Bauer (guitar), Teddy Kotick (bass), Art Taylor (drums)

By Bob Blumenthal

By 1952, when the first sessions in this final collection of Verve studio material were recorded, Charlie Parker's legend had begun to eclipse Charlie Parker's music.

While he experienced a new level of commercial success through his affiliation with producer Norman Granz, the tremendous appetites and addictions (for food, drugs, sex, experience) and the seemingly unconnected escapades continued. America's underground of musicians and music-loving bohemians, who had adopted bebop as their song of rebellion, came to thrive on the sensationalism of Parker; shortly before his death in 1955, Parker noted that many in his audience came only for a glimpse at "the world's greatest junkie, the supreme hipster."

The stories which constitute Parker's legend are numerous, generally sensational and often conflicting. Parker takes all the money a friend has, then gives it to a skid row bum after punching the bum out; Parker enters a swank party stark naked, blowing his alto; Parker, who would often assume a British accent when introduced to classical composers, rolls around on garbage cans between nightclub sets to gain inspiration. As the legend has it, no one could consume more alcohol, shoot more horse, or have more women. The rules of society meant little to Parker, who answered the hypocrisy of his own-and-order America by making his own laws.

Parker's life is inextricably linked with his art because he created both a new music and a new lifestyle, a new identity for black (and white) musicians. LeRoi Jones described the sur-

rounding social context in *Blues People*: a new level of contact with the white majority and participation for black Americans during the war, followed by unchanged discrimination and an even clearer perception that rejection was based on skin color. An attitude developed among blacks which Jones calls "objective cynicism," that recognized whites would always view blacks as strange, and proceeded to reinforce that strangeness.

Bebop, and Charlie Parker, manifest this objective cynicism by rejecting the assimilationist forces in the swing music craze and the black middle class. Bop's clearest characteristics (rhythmic complexity and the revived popularity of blues structure) signalled a return to jazz's non-European roots, and all of Parker's innovations produced a more complex music that demanded to be taken seriously. Musicians, cut off from the American mainstream when they began viewing themselves as artists instead of entertainers, made the separation complete by adopting their own clothing, vernacular and bad habits. Parker led the way in music and life style and in the process became a deity in the bebop subculture.

What drove the man who inspired such change? Jazz literature abounds with uneducated guesses and vaguely knowledgeable theories. Robert Reisner, who compiled the most fascinating oral history of Parker (*Bird: The Legend of Charlie Parker*, Da Capo Press), calls Parker a neurotic, and cites a report prepared in 1954 by Bellevue Hospital ("passive dependency . . . paranoid tendencies . . . a hostile and evasive personality . . . psychoanalytic diagnosis: latent schizophrenia"). Maxwell T. Cohen, attorney for Parker's estate, arrived at a far different conclusion by examining original music manuscripts. "They are meticulous and reveal a composer of great restraint . . . He was not a shiftless bohemian." (continued)

Also available on Verve:

Charlie Parker: The Verve Years (1948-50)
Parker with strings; the Dizzy Gillespie/Thelonious Monk sides (VE-2-2501)

Charlie Parker: The Verve Years (1950-51)
Bird's studio and Carnegie Hall recordings with string orchestra; the legendary sessions with Miles Davis, Coleman Hawkins, Buddy Rich and others (VE-2-2512)

Norman Granz Jam Session: The Charlie Parker Sides
With Johnny Hodges, Benny Carter, Ben Webster, Flip Phillips, Barney Kessel, Ray Brown, Oscar Peterson and J.C. Heard (VE-2-2508)

Jazz at the Philharmonic: Bird and Pres—The '46 Concerts
Three historic concerts, featuring Charlie Parker, Lester Young, Dizzy Gillespie, Coleman Hawkins and Buck Clayton (VE-2-2518)

Afro-Cuban Jazz: Machito/Chico O'Farrill/Charlie Parker/Dizzy Gillespie
The legendary recordings, including the Machito-O'Farrill-Bird "Afro-Cuban Suite" and the O'Farrill-Gillespie "Manteca Suite" (VE-2-2522)

Dizzy Gillespie/Roy Eldridge: Diz and Roy
Dizzy and Roy's two historic sessions from 1954 and 1955, featuring Oscar Peterson, Harry "Sweets" Edison, Ray Brown and others (VE-2-2524)

VE-2-2523



(2632 074)
(2367 347 / 2367 348)

Having as its source the vast library of music recorded by Norman Granz, Creed Taylor and others over a period of three decades, the Verve Collection focuses on outstanding performances by some of America's finest jazz artists.

All rights reserved. Unauthorized duplication is a violation of applicable laws.



This record has been engineered and manufactured in accordance with standards developed by the Recording Industry Association of America, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to the betterment of recorded music and literature.

© © 1977 POLYDOR INCORPORATED
Manufactured and Marketed by Polydor Incorporated, A Polygram Company
810 Seventh Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10019.
Distributed by Phonodisc Incorporated.
Printed in U.S.A

Previously released on Verve albums V-8003, V-8005, V-8007, V-8008, and V-8009