

CHARLIE PARKER ON DIAL VOL 2

The personnel for the Dial reissues on the enclosed record represent a departure from Charlie Parker's usual studio organisations. Here we find Parker doing something he had not attempted since his dates with Tiny Grimes and Sarah Vaughan, playing obligatos for a singer. The vocalist, Earl Coleman, was a Parker discovery and a Billie Eckstine imitator. Coleman came to the Dial studios counter to the policies of that company which was exclusively a jazz label. In an interview with Bob Reisner (Bird, The Legend of Charlie Parker), Dial's chief of A&R, Ross Russell, said that Parker was so insistent on using Coleman that he could not be dissuaded and that this development came at a very bad time, because Parker, who was anxious to get back to New York City, had agreed to make one farewell date in California. Russell's solution to the problem was to propose a special recording session on which Coleman would be the featured performer. This plan was accepted by Parker. Russell then attacked the problem of finding a suitable rhythm section to assist Parker in accompanying the singer. Fortunately Erroll Garner was then winding up an engagement at The Haig with a trio composed of George 'Red' Callender, Harold 'Doc' West and himself.

Garner had been on the fringe of the musical revolution that swept Fifty-Second Street in the early and middle 1940's and had often worked such spots as the Onyx Club and the Three Deuces with Parker. West had been Jay McShann's drummer during Parker's tenure with that band and had made the RED CROSS date for Savoy with Bird and Grimes. His style was compounded of Jo Jones and Chick Webb, for whom West had once substituted. Red Callender was the leading jazz bassist on the West Coast. Callender and West played what might be best described as a late Swing style and were ideal supporting musicians for Garner's rambling, behind-the-beat, impressionistic piano work.

On paper the personnel for the February 19, 1947 Dial date was a risky mix, neo-Swing musicians led by the idea man and leading player of the bebop movement in accompaniment to an inexperienced singer styled after Billie Eckstine. Yet the session was Dial's most successful in several respects. Much to the management's surprise, and chagrin, Coleman's THIS IS ALWAYS proved a hit and outsold every other release in the Dial catalogue. The two instrumentals have been prestigious Parker's almost from the date of their release and COOL BLUES won the *Grand Prix du Disque* in France when it appeared in that country.

The session, Parker's first following his release from Camarillo State Hospital, was supervised by Russell and took place at the C.P. MacGregor Studios, Western Avenue near Eighth Street, one of the best in Hollywood and noted for its very high ceiling which gives these recordings a brilliant room sound. The two Earl Coleman vocals consumed over three hours and left the singer voiceless and unable to continue, although no completely satisfactory take had been completed. They all display mistakes, breathing difficulties, and even errors in diction. Throughout this part of the session Bird played with the type of

musicianship most likely to assist the singer, relegating himself to the background and constantly supporting Coleman with cues, leads and paraphrases of the melody. These performances are models of instrumental accompaniment and rank with the records Louis Armstrong made with various obscure blues singers in the 1920 s. DARK SHADOWS was written by a Los Angeles trumpet player named Shifty Henry for Earl Coleman and, issued on this album for the first time is the long missing D master. Part of Parker's solo from the C master was transcribed for Woody Herman's reed section in the band's arrangement of I'VE GOT NEWS FOR YOU. It is interesting to note that Coleman subsequently signed on with several other labels, recorded with all sorts of musical backgrounds and produced nothing but flops. He had risen to his finest hour when Bird played those beautiful saxophone obligatos behind him.

With Coleman on the sidelines the Erroll Garner Trio, augmented by Bird, got on to the instrumentals. Seven tracks were cut in about thirty minutes. BIRD'S NEST is a Parker construction on the chord sequence of George Gershwin's I GOT RHYTHM (with an altered middle eight) and was revealed for the first time in the studio. All three takes are identical in solo sequence and are taken at the lively "medium bounce" tempo Parker liked so well. BIRD'S NEST was cut three times in rapid succession and the final take, Parker's choice, has a slight increase in tempo and seems the most perfectly balanced and fluent.

On the twelve bar blues Garner complained that the tempo of the first two takes was excessively fast. His own style with its unorthodox fingering and very full chords did not tolerate this kind of bravura improvising and he is obviously uncomfortable and inaccurate on 1054-A and 1054-B which Dial released some years later as HOT BLUES and BLOWTOP BLUES respectively. The solo sequence on all takes was identical except that after the first take Garner's solo was reduced from 3 to 2 choruses and as a result bassist Red Callender took an extra chorus. The third and fourth takes are right for everyone and, if anything, justify Garner's complaints, for these are genuinely successful collaborations. An overall reduction from 66 (take A) to 40 (take C) bars a minute was made. They are also amongst Bird's gayest and most uningenuous pieces of music. The instrumentals were referred to by their creator as RHYTHM and BLUES. The eventual titles were supplied by the issuing label.

In a reply to a recent query by Spotlite as to the circumstances of this date, Ross Russell, now retired and living in California, states that a total of fifteen takes were made on this occasion: THIS IS ALWAYS 4 times; DARK SHADOWS 4 times; BIRD'S NEST 3 and the blues, 4. The final take in each case was the choice or, in the case of the vocals, the best possible. How the D master of DARK SHADOWS became overlooked and never issued remains a mystery. Presumably at the time the master became damaged or mislaid and as a result the C master was used for 78 release. The version on this record originates from

a recently re-discovered acetate dubbing. Russell is fairly sure that 1051-A and 1051-B of THIS IS ALWAYS were never issued and have been lost forever. Thus all but the two takes just mentioned are now preserved intact and presented in sequence as originally recorded at Hollywood, California that day in February 1947. After Parker, Coleman and Shifty Henry had departed the date concluded with two originals by the Erroll Garner Trio, PASTEL and TRIO which are not included here. Spotlite's forthcoming release, 103, Volume 3, will present the entire Dial session featuring Charlie Parker which took place exactly one week later at the same studios and produced such classics as RELAXIN' AT CAMARILLO.

PERSONNEL

CHARLIE PARKER QUARTET

Charlie Parker alt; Erroll Garner p; George 'Red' Callender bs; Harold 'Doc' West d; Earl Coleman vcl. (Side One only).

C.P. MacGregor Studios, Western Avenue near Eighth Street, Hollywood—Wednesday, February 19, 1947

SIDE ONE

This is always	(3:10)	D1051-C
This is always	(3:07)	D1051-D
Dark shadows	(4:02)	D1052-A
Dark shadows	(3:10)	D1052-B
Dark shadows	(3:06)	D1052-C
Dark shadows	(2:57)	D1052-D

SIDE TWO

Bird's nest	(2:48)	D1053-A
Bird's nest	(2:47)	D1053-B
Bird's nest	(2:42)	D1053-C
Cool blues	(1:56)	D1054-A
Cool blues	(2:20)	D1054-B
Cool blues	(3:05)	D1054-C
Cool blues	(2:47)	D1054-D

SPOTLITE 102