

CHARLIE PARKER AT THE PERSHING BALLROOM

CHICAGO 1950

Many thousands of words have been written about Charlie Parker in the past 30-plus years, and I will not attempt to expand on any of those books, articles, reviews and liner notes. It is evidence enough that if you are holding this LP jacket and reading these notes, then you certainly know who Bird was.

The tape that was used to make up this album is from a private collection never before heard by more than a dozen people, and is presented here just as it was recorded in the Fall of 1950. It is not one of a series of "newly discovered" Bird tapes, but rather a single tape from a single session, a one night gig at the Pershing Ballroom (Whatever happened to ballrooms? — where you could stand around the bandstand and hear any number of great big bands and small groups without being bugged by drink minimums, cover charges and hustling waitresses) of the Pershing Hotel, 64th and Cottage Grove, on Chicago's south side. In the late 1940s, the Pershing was one of those places, besides night clubs, where you could hear jazz.

At the time, I was young and very inexperienced having had no conception of the value of recording a complete tune or a complete set of an artist on tape, rather than merely solos of the artist himself. (I am reminded of the infamous Dene Benedetti who followed Bird around with a wire recorder and recorded only his solos, and whose recordings are seemingly lost forever.) With me, it was a matter of economics and lack of blank tape that led me to record only Bird's solos. I used an early model Revere portable with pushbuttons and a five inch reel, single 3-3/4 speed and a Shure mike.

I arrived early at the Pershing, but later than I intended and there was already a crowd in the front of the bandstand waiting for Bird to appear. There was no room left to set up to record and there were already a couple of other tape machines set up on the front edge of the low stage. In desperation, I went around to the rear of the bandstand backstage, and found an unused dressing room with a single wall speaker, controlled by a single off-on switch, that was used to monitor the central on-stage microphone: the one that Bird would be using. I set up my machine, and although I would not be able to see Bird (a great disappointment), at least I would have his music on my own tape.

Things went fairly well for the first set, however, my solitude was interrupted by the appearance of some unknown individual, somewhere between *Hot House* and *Embraceable You*, who insisted on staying and rapping—sometimes about Bird, but mostly about nothing. Fortunately, he left during the beginning of *All The Things You Are*, so during those tracks on this LP, you will hear muffled voices in the background.

Concerning the musicians with Bird, I was fortunate to be able to play the tape recently for my old friend, Chicago drummer, Bruz Freeman (now a tennis pro in Los Angeles, and semi-active in music). It was really a mind blower for Bruz to hear the tape, and it was truly a nostalgic evening. The end result was that Bruz recognized his 1950 style and playing, and speculated that the most likely people that made up the balance of the group were his brothers George on guitar and Von on tenor with Leroy Jackson on bass and Chris Anderson on piano. The vocalist remains a mystery. Bruz had played some dates with Bird when he came to Chicago, and said that it was possible, but not likely, that there was a different tenor and piano on the first five tracks of this album.

For twenty-five years I had not listened to the tape very much because I guess I was disappointed in the overall result. I had wanted more perfection in the recording, however, I kept the tape in good condition, considering it was some of the early plastic tape and had broken and been patched a few times. Having heard that I had a tape of Bird, Art Zimmerman of Zim Records called me during a business trip he made to the west coast in March 1975. Upon hearing the tape, he reacted as though it were a great archeological discovery that would change the course of history. In the hands of engineer Jerry Valburn, the tape was cleaned up for issue on LP.

Although there have been better Bird tapes released, and some really bad ones as far as reproduction and completeness are concerned, this tape is nevertheless a good, solid, 40-plus minutes of rare Bird. Recorded during one of the best periods of his career, he is in excellent form on this date—one of the many one-nighters, in one of the many cities that was fortunate enough to have Bird pause long enough to show all those who cared to listen just how the alto sax should be played.

So, here is a single rare Bird tape from a private collection and equally rare photo of Bird, heretofore unpublished, on the cover. The photo was taken by a girl friend of mine during the same period in time. The years have passed and the girl friend is only a faint memory—but *BIRD LIVES!!!*

Donald Coy, June 1976

SIDE ONE

| | TIME |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 1. INDIANA (McDonald-Hanley) Shapiro, Bernstein & Co., Inc. — ASCAP | 5:53 |
| 2. I CAN'T GET STARTED (V. Duke) Chappell & Co., Inc. — ASCAP | 2:46 |
| 3. ANTHROPOLOGY (Gillespie-Parker) Consolidated Music Pub. — BMI Atlantic Music Corp. — BMI | 5:14 |
| 4. OUT OF NOWHERE (J. Green) Famous Music Corp. — ASCAP | 2:45 |
| 5. GET HAPPY (Arlen-Koehler) Remick Music, Inc. — ASCAP | 5:31 |

SIDE TWO

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 1. HOT HOUSE (Dameron) Bregman, Vocco and Conn, Inc. | 5:02 |
| 2. EMBRACEABLE YOU (G. & I. Gershwin) Harms, Inc. — ASCAP | 2:00 |
| 3. BODY & SOUL (Kramer-Robe) Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp. — ASCAP | 2:14 |
| 4. COOL BLUES (Parker) Mayhew Music Co. — BMI | 3:12 |
| 5. STAR DUST (H. Carmichael) Mills Music, Inc. — ASCAP | :55 |
| 6. ALL THE THINGS YOU ARE (J. Kern) Chappell & Co., Inc. — ASCAP | 3:06 |
| 7. BILLIE'S BOUNCE (Parker) Savoy Music — BMI | 4:11 |
| 8. PENNIES FROM HEAVEN (Burke-Johnson) Chappell & Co., Inc. — ASCAP | 3:19 |

Recorded by Don Coy
Produced by Art Zimmerman
Master tape prepared by Jerry Valburn
Cover photo by Bonnie Hedge (courtesy of Don Coy)
Cover art: Leroy Nix
Special thanks to Frank Malcolm



ZM-1003

RECORDS

P. O. BOX 158, JERICHO, N. Y. 11753

© 1976 ZIM RECORDS