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ART TATUM KNOCKIN' MYSELF OUT

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Live and studio recordings, 1940s:

Live Trio Radio Broadcasts, 1950s:

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|---|---|
| <div>1 Lonesome Graveyard (3:08)</div> <div>2 Corinne Corrina (2:38)</div> <div>"Big Joe" Turner, vocal; Joe Thomas, trumpet; Art Tatum, piano; Oscar Moore, guitar; Billy Taylor, bass; Hank Porter, drums; New York, June 13, 1941.</div> <div>3 Knockin' Myself Out (4:04)</div> <div>4 Toledo Blues (3:33)</div> <div>Art Tatum, piano & vocal on "Toledo Blues"; Chocolate Williams, bass & vocal on "Knockin' Myself Out"; New York, July 26, 1941.</div> <div>5 Lady Be Good (4:28)</div> <div>6 Sweet Georgia Brown (7:18)</div> <div>Frank Mervin, trumpet; Art Tatum, piano; Benzer Paul, bass; New York, September 18, 1941.</div> <div>7 Rock Me, Mama (2:59)</div> <div>Same personnel and date as tracks 1 & 2</div> <div>8 Wee Baby Blues (2:54)</div> <div>"Big Joe" Turner, vocal; Joe Thomas, trumpet; Rhonda Ball, clarinet; Art Tatum, piano; John Collins, guitar; Billy Taylor, bass; Ed Dougherty, drums; New York, January 21, 1941.</div> <div>9 Tea For Two (3:23)</div> <div>Roy Eldridge, trumpet; Jack Teagarden, trombone; Barney Bigard, clarinet; Lionel Hampton, vibes; Art Tatum, piano; Al Casey, guitar; Oscar Pettiford, bass; Sid Catlett, drums; Metropolitan Opera House, New York, January 18, 1944.</div> | <div>10 Flying Home (Theme) (0:48)</div> <div>11 I Cover The Waterfront (4:38)</div> <div>12 Soft Winds (3:23)</div> <div>13 Tenderly (4:58)</div> <div>14 Tea For Two (3:11)</div> <div>15 Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams (6:30)</div> <div>16 Body and Soul (0:59)</div> <div>Art Tatum, piano; Everett Barkdale, guitar; Slim Stewart, bass; Basin Street, New York, October 1955</div> <div>17 Flying Home (Theme) (1:43)</div> <div>18 Moon Song (5:56)</div> <div>19 Just One Of Those Things (3:48)</div> <div>20 Would You Like To Take A Walk (5:33)</div> <div>21 You Go To My Head (5:23)</div> <div>Art Tatum, piano; Everett Barkdale, guitar; Bill Pemberton, bass; Olivia's Patio Lounge, Washington DC, October 1956</div> <div>NB: Despite the great efforts taken in its restoration and remastering, some distortion remains present on this historic recording, and is at times particularly noticeable on the latter tracks.</div> |
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XR remastering by Andrew Rose at Pristine Audio, June 2008
Cover artwork based on a photograph of Art Tatum
Compilation devised, researched and sourced by Lynn Bayley

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ART TATUM

KNOCKIN' MYSELF OUT

PAJZ 008

KNOCKIN' MYSELF OUT - ART TATUM

In the long history of jazz, only one musician has stood head and shoulders above all others, not only in his classification but even when compared to those who played other instruments. That one musician was pianist Art Tatum. Born blind in one eye, he lost 75% of his sight in the other by the time he was a teenager, but like Lennie Tristano, another piano genius of similar ability but far less popular appeal, with Tatum it was the talent and not the handicap that made him unique. Ungainly in appearance, heavy-set and homely, he lacked the manner and looks of a great artist. His first major exposure occurred at the age of 18 when he played on radio broadcasts in his native Toledo, Ohio. He moved to New York in 1932, where he quickly gained acclaim as the finest pianist of his day, able to synthesize every style of jazz piano from New Orleans, stride and boogie-woogie and fuse them with a technique so prodigious that even such technical wizards as pianist Earl Hines refused to compete with him (though bassist Quinn Wilson remembers their lone encounter, at a late-night club in Chicago after Hines's band finished its gig at the Grand Terrace Hotel).

Partly as a means of enticing listeners who couldn't follow what he was doing, and partly because it helped him negotiate the keyboard easier from one end to the other, Tatum often played arpeggios and runs that dazzled listeners but were musically superfluous. This aspect of his style eventually led to his being disparaged by critics, many of whom dismissed him as "really a classical pianist" who didn't swing and was apparently out of touch with "true jazz." Nevertheless, Tatum kept at it until his untimely demise at the age of 46, a victim of uremia, and despite the carping of critics he was—and remains—unanimously admired by other pianists, even such modern ones as Cecil Taylor, Bill Evans, McCoy Tyner and Jack Reilly. They know, as did Hines, Ellington, Waller, Morton, Wilson, Heywood, Mary Lou Williams, Peterson, Hyman and Tristano, that it didn't matter what the critics said. Tatum not only had the quickest fingers in the world (Vladimir Horowitz often said that quite a few classical pianists, including himself, would be the worse for competition if Tatum had been allowed to become a concert artist), but the quickest musical mind. A genius in bondage is still a genius.

This album includes the only known existing recordings of Tatum after hours, from July and September of 1941. After hours, Tatum indulged in something he did very rarely in his other professional gigs: he played, and occasionally sang, the blues, and did so superbly. Fellow pianist Jay McShann, a man not known for showering compliments on his rivals, is on record as saying, "Art could really play the blues. To me, he was the world's greatest blues player, and I think few people realized that." Toledo Blues is the only surviving recording of Tatum singing the blues.

Surprisingly, one of his after-hours sessions, with trumpeter Joe Thomas, clarinetist Edmond Hall, Barksdale, bassist Billy Taylor, drummer Sid Catlett and blues shouter "Big Joe" Turner, spilled over into the recording studio. Three of those recordings are included here as an extension of the live 1941 tracks; the only real difference is that Tatum is playing on a fine piano instead of a battered old upright. But Tatum did not just thrive in after-hours sessions. He also thrived in live settings, sometimes with his trio, occasionally with musicians who were his good friends as well as colleagues. One of these is included here, a brief but intense performance of Tea for Two, given at the Metropolitan Opera House in 1944, part of an "all-star" concert featuring winners of Esquire magazine's annual jazz awards. (Yes, also there was a time when Esquire really cared about jazz and not just popular music.) Despite the intrusion of an announcer speaking his name, this band—which included his good friends, trumpeter Roy Eldridge and vibist Lionel Hampton—is really flying, and Tatum is flying along with them.

The remainder of this album is comprised of two nightclub broadcasts from New York and Washington with his trio. The second of these, ironically, is the next-to-last time he ever performed in public. On November 4, 1956, he was forced to check into Queen of Angels hospital in Los Angeles; the next day, he was dead. Despite all of the wonderful recordings that his trio made, there is an extra spark to these live sessions that seems to push Tatum to even greater heights. The Joe Turner recordings were once available on an MCA CD. The Esquire all-stars concert was once on a LaserLight CD. The remainder of these tracks were only issued as small-label LPs, many years ago, and have long been out of print. Put together, they give us another dimension of Tatum as an artist, working in the milieu he enjoyed best, a live setting with friends before audiences, public or private, that understood his genius and appreciated it without wanting the carnival act.

Notes by Lynn Bayley - this article is available in full at www.pristineclassical.com/jazz

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