

JazzPicks

BOB PERKINS

Errol Garner: *Body and Soul*

Columbia Masterpieces CK 47035

Pianist Errol Garner passed away almost 30 years ago, but fans with a few miles on their odometer remember well the jaunty, bouncy beat he used to coax out of the piano. He was popular with dyed-in-the-wool jazz lovers and lovers of standard pop music. His music had mass appeal and was just plain good. And as Duke Ellington might describe it—beyond category.

Garner's career got a head start when he began showing promise as a pianist at age three. Lots of kids like to bang on the piano at that age, but Garner's banging began to make sense early on. He reportedly played by ear, never bothering to learn to read music. He could hear a tune played once and copy it verbatim.

He worked around his hometown of Pittsburgh for some years before moving to New York and working many of the clubs along the famed 52nd Street, such as Tondelayo's and The Three Deuces.

Garner was a complete showman. He knew how to entertain an audience and routinely played up the fact that he was short in stature by piling phone books on his piano stool—supposedly to elevate himself well above the piano keyboard. (This scene was always good for a chuckle.) His grunts, groans, and animation while playing were also personal signatures.

Check out Garner's *Body and Soul* CD—it's one of his best. Garner's very successful career ended January 3, 1977, when he died of lung cancer.

Brian Pastor Big Band:

Common Men

BPO Music

(produced privately)

Trombonist, bandleader, and music educator Brian Pastor has been fronting a big band for some years and has performed at countless jazz venues in the tri-state area—always to standing ovations and entreaties to come back and do it again soon!

It is no small trick to put together a 17-piece orchestra, let alone keep it popular, current, and on-call—feats Brian Pastor has managed to accomplish. Pastor's latest CD is a doozy titled *Common Men*—and yes, Aaron Copland's gem, "Fanfare for the Common Man," is included in the CD's 14 standards and originals. The musicians and the music are top-notch. If you like big band music, this CD is a must-have.

Milt Jackson: *Memories of Thelonious Sphere Monk*

Pablo oJCCD-851-2

Milt Jackson—undeniably the greatest modern jazz vibraphonist to ever wield the mallets—does it again with this tribute to Thelonious Monk, who, more than six decades ago, was one of the pioneers of modern jazz. Four tunes on this CD are Monk originals, and Jackson and his three associates, bassist Ray Brown, pianist Monty Alexander, and drummer Granville "Mickey" Roker, play Monk's tunes and the three other selections on the disc so very well that one might think they wrote them. This group just gets it.

Even though Milt Jackson passed away half a dozen years ago, his legend and legacy remain intact. The mention of his name still commands a bow from veteran jazz vibraphonists and his artistry continues to be the yardstick by which all up-and-coming vibraphonists are measured.

