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Historical / BY CARLO WOLFF

The '60s, Inside & Out

That pianist **Bill Evans** and saxophonist **Albert Ayler** were contemporaries in the 1960s attests to the creativity of that turbulent decade. The two were at opposite ends of the jazz spectrum, to put it mildly.

Evans was decidedly more mainstream; still, the eclectic *Some Other Time: The Lost Session From The Black Forest* (Resonance Records 2019; 97:50 ★★★) speaks to his ability to infuse standards with a fresh approach. The two-disc set, featuring sides from a 1968 session at MPS Studios in Germany, are the only studio recordings of Evans with bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Jack DeJohnette. The CDs are cause for celebration, not just because they've finally come to light, but also because of their consistently high quality.

Ordering info: resonancerecords.org

Ayler was less a paradigm than a clue to a new direction. Recorded more than 50 years ago, the newly released *Bells/Prophecy—Expanded Edition* (ESP-Disk 4076; 61:39/44:30 ★★★★★) continues to startle.

A bristling quintet with Ayler on tenor saxophone, Charles Tyler on alto, Lewis Worrell on bass, Sunny Murray on drums and Ayler's younger brother, Donald, on trumpet launches the first disc with "Bells," originally recorded at Town Hall in New York City in 1965. It's easily the most developed tune of this package. The balance of that disc consists of Ayler with Gary Peacock on bass and Murray on drums. All are live recordings.

The second disc consists of six more tracks recorded in 1964 at the Cellar Café in New York City, tracks that are the basis of the original ESP records *Bells* and *Prophecy*. What's rare on the first disc are other Cellar Café tracks, a few of them previously only available on the stunningly comprehensive *Holy Ghost* (Revenant), a seminal Ayler box set from 2004.

The music, alternating otherworldly skronks and squeals with passages evoking street-corner Salvation Army bands, is exhausting, panoramic and unique. Ayler, who became known as "Little Bird" in his

native Cleveland, was a school of one, a player of singular vision and expressiveness.

While much of the Ayler set has gone in and out of release, *Some Other Time* is paradoxically a fresher matter. Not only does it showcase Evans treating classics like "Baubles, Bangles & Beads," "What Kind Of Fool Am I?" and "You're Gonna Hear From Me" twice each with no leveling off of in-



ventiveness, it also reveals a pianist equally at home in relaxed, casual swing and plush, driving bop. The album's range from a jaunty "I'll Remember April" to the pensive, autumnal title track is astonishing, and Evans' touch and tone may even be fuller here than on his more introspective Riverside recordings.

This music documents a trio that lasted for only six months in 1968. More impressive, however, is the method in which Resonance Records came into possession of these tapes. The set's 40-page booklet goes into fascinating detail, including interviews with DeJohnette, Gomez and Resonance Records' jazz forensics specialist Zev Feldman.

The set's 21 tracks are astonishingly fresh, and the musical conversation among Evans, Gomez and DeJohnette is lively. Like the music itself, the sound hasn't dated, and the packaging is appropriately upscale.

The ESP set, by contrast, deserved a historical booklet, not just expressive, occasionally bewildering liner notes and the reprint of a cool Dan Morgenstern review from back in the day. Ayler, still polarizing after all these years, was nevertheless a titan of modern jazz saxophone. Giving the man the deluxe treatment he's due would have been a nice gesture.

DB

Ordering info: espdisk.com