

George Shearing & Hank Jones – The Spirit of 176 (2003)

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01. *Oh, Look at Me Now* 02. *Angel Eyes* 03. *I Mean You* 04. *You Don't Know What Love Is*
05. *To Hank Jones* 06. *Minor Contention* 07. *Ask Me Now* 08. *Triste* 09. *Take A Good Look*
10. *Sweet Lorraine* 11. *Young No More* 12. *Lonely Moments* 13. *Star Eyes* 14. *Confirmation*
George Shearing (piano) Hank Jones (piano)

George Shearing and Hank Jones have always been very well-rounded pianists fully capable of playing unaccompanied solos. Their unique matchup as a two-piano duo on this Concord release works surprisingly well for the two pianists manage to stay out of each other's way and the ensembles are not overcrowded. The pianists tackle colorful material including "Angel Eyes," and Thelonious Monk's "I Mean You," an original apiece, Mary Lou Williams's "Lonely Moments," "Star Eyes" and "Confirmation," and the results are swinging and tasteful. This somewhat obscure Concord CD is worth investigating. ---Scott Yanow, Rovi

More than a few jazz critics and musicians dismiss duo piano releases as gimmicks, though I stumped pianist Tommy Flanagan when I replied to his negative statement about them with "What about your albums with Hank Jones?" This 1988 session pairs Jones with George Shearing, who also has the necessary chops to complement a partner's playing rather than turn it into a train wreck. One can easily imagine the smiles exchanged between these two veterans as they romp through a rollicking take of Thelonious Monk's "I Mean You" or their buoyant treatment of Antonio Carlos Jobim's classic bossa nova anthem "Triste."

But the ballads are something special as well. "Angel Eyes" becomes even more moody with

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the addition of a droning vamp repeated throughout the song. "You Don't Know What Love Is" packs an emotional punch with an especially understated performance. A little engineering wizardry (Shearing told me it was greatly increasing the gain) adds a bit of mystery to the introduction and close of "Star Eyes," played with a light Latin rhythm. The somewhat obscure "Young No More" is another hidden gem awaiting discovery.

Mary Lou Williams' infrequently played "Lonely Moments" features the two players negotiating her wild bop obstacle course without a single slip. Their jaunty closer is a marvelous midtempo take of Charlie Parker's "Confirmation." Shearing can't resist a bit of playfulness as he inserts an excerpt from Igor Stravinsky's ballet "Petrouchka" at the end of his original "To Hank Jones." "Minor Contention" is yet another daredevil bop vehicle penned by Jones.

This reissue sounds even better than the original release, since it is a hybrid super audio CD (mixed in 5.1 Surround sound) which still plays in a normal unit until you get around to upgrading your equipment. Anyone who has enjoyed duo piano sessions as much as I have over the past 30 years should pick up this disc immediately. ---Ken Dryden, chattanooga.com

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