

Art Tatum - The Art of Tatum (1938-39 Jazz Life)

Wpisany przez bluesever

Niedziela, 04 Wrzesień 2011 20:20 - Zmieniony Poniedziałek, 21 Lipiec 2014 22:16

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01. *Fine and Dandy* 02. *I've Got the World on a String* 03. *I've Got a Right to Sing the Blues*
04. *I'm Coming Virginia* 05. *Day In - Day Out* 06. *Make Believe* 07. *Sweet Emmalina* 08.
Indiana 09. *Sweet Lorraine* [play](#) 10. *I'll Get By (As Long As I Have You)* 11. *I'll Never Be*
the Same 12. *Judy* 13. *Elegy* 14. *Body and Soul* [play](#)
15. *Can't We Be Friends* 16. *All God's Chillun Got Rhythm*

Originally recorded: in Los Angeles 1938-39

Arthur Tatum Jr. (October 13, 1909 – November 5, 1956) was an American jazz pianist and virtuoso. The jazz pianist and educator Kenny Barron has commented that "I have every record [Tatum] ever made — and I try never to listen to them ... If I did, I'd throw up my hands and give up!" Jean Cocteau dubbed Tatum "a crazed Chopin." Count Basie called him the eighth wonder of the world. Tatum was born in Toledo, Ohio. From infancy he suffered from cataracts of disputed cause, which left him blind in one eye, and with only very limited vision in the other. Some surgery improved Tatum's eye condition to a degree, but this effort was reversed when he was assaulted in 1930 at age 20.

He played piano from his youth, and played professionally in Ohio and especially the Cleveland area before moving to New York City in 1932. A child prodigy, Tatum learned to play by copying piano roll recordings his mother owned, playing by ear by the age of three. Tatum would learn both parts of a piece for four hands by feeling the keys depressed on the piano. By the age of six he was able to play songs originally performed as duets, unaware that there were supposed to be two players. In this way, he developed an incredibly fast playing style, without losing any of his accuracy. As a child he was also very sensitive to the piano's intonation, and insisted it be tuned often.

Tatum drew inspiration from his contemporaries James P. Johnson and Fats Waller, who exemplified the best stride piano style. Tatum's meteoric success began with his appearance at a cutting contest in 1933 that included Waller and others. Standard contest pieces included Johnson's "Harlem Strut" and "Carolina Shout," and Fats Waller's "Handful of Keys." Tatum was victorious, presenting his arrangement of "Tiger Rag." This was considered by Harlem musicians to be perhaps the last word in stride piano. In addition, the effortless gliding of Tatum's hands, in his interpretation of many other popular tunes, puzzled all who witnessed the phenomenon. Though many of his notes have been transcribed and played, his execution remains something of a mystery, and can be seen in films. Tatum also preferred to play last where several pianists played. He was not challenged further until Donald Lambert initiated a half-serious rivalry with him.

When Tatum's fastest tracks of "Tiger Rag" are slowed down, they still reveal a steady rhythm, with confident syncopations. From the foundation of stride, Tatum made great leaps in terms of technique and theory, and honed a new style that would greatly influence later jazz pianists, such as Thelonious Monk, Oscar Peterson, Billy Taylor, Bill Evans, and Chick Corea. Tatum's extensive use of the pentatonic scale, for example, may have inspired later pianists to further mine its possibilities as a device for soloing.

Tatum introduced a strong, swinging pulse to jazz piano, as well as other new sounds in his improvisation and self-accompaniment. He did play many lines resembling jazz solos, but he rarely abandoned the original melodic lines of the songs he played, preferring instead to feature innovative reharmonization (changing the chord progressions supporting the melodies). Occasionally, the reharmonizing was simply a matter of altering the root movements of a tune so as to more effectively apply already commonly used chords from early jazz and classical music. Yet many of Tatum's harmonic concepts and larger chord voicings were well ahead of their time in the 1930s (except for their partial emergence in popular songs of the jazz age) and they would be explored by bebop-era musicians 20 years later. Tatum worked some of the upper extensions of chords into his lines, and this practice was further developed by Bud Powell and Charlie Parker, which in turn was an influence on the development of 'modern jazz'. He also had a penchant for filling spaces within melodies with trademark runs and embellishments. The notes and phrases within those embellishments made genuine musical statements praised by jazz and classical audiences alike.

The speed of the techniques, however, made them somewhat enigmatic and difficult for ensemble playing. Tatum tended to record unaccompanied, partly because relatively few musicians could keep up with his lightning-fast tempos and advanced harmonic vocabulary. He formed a trio during the early 1940s with bassist Slam Stewart and guitarist Tiny Grimes. During

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their short period of time together, they recorded a number of 78 rpm discs that feature interplay among the musicians. Transcriptions of Tatum are popular and are often practiced assiduously. But perhaps because his playing was so difficult to copy, only a handful of musicians — such as Oscar Peterson, Johnny Costa, Johnny Guarnieri, Francois Rilhac, Adam Makowicz, Steven Mayer and Dan Knight — have attempted to seriously emulate or challenge Tatum. Phineas Newborn's playing, such as his recording of Willow Weep For Me, is closely modelled on Tatum. Tatum recorded commercially from 1932 until near his death, though the predominantly solo nature of his skills meant that recording opportunities were somewhat intermittent.

Tatum recorded for Decca (1934–41), Capitol (1949, 1952) and for the labels associated with Norman Granz (1953–56). For Granz, he recorded an extended series of solo albums and group recordings with, among others, Ben Webster, Buddy DeFranco, Benny Carter and Lionel Hampton. Although Tatum refrained from classifying himself as a classical pianist, he adapted several classical works into new arrangements that showcased his own musical style. Only a small amount of film showing Art Tatum playing exists today as the vast majority has been lost (several minutes of professionally shot archival footage can, for example, be found in Martin Scorsese's documentary *Martin Scorsese Presents the Blues*). Tatum appeared on Steve Allen's *Tonight Show* in the early 1950s, and on other television shows from this era. Unfortunately, all of the kinescopes of the Allen shows, which were stored in a warehouse along with other now defunct shows, were thrown into a local rubbish dump to make room for new studios.

However, the soundtracks were recorded off-air by Tatum enthusiasts at the time, and many are included in Storyville Records extensive series of rare Tatum recordings. Art Tatum died in Los Angeles, California from the complications of uremia (as a result of kidney failure), having been a heavy drinker since his teen years. He is interred in the Forest Lawn Memorial Park Cemetery in Glendale, California. Tatum posthumously received the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 1989. When Tatum walked into a club where Fats Waller was playing, Waller stepped away from the piano bench to make way for Tatum, announcing, "I only play the piano, but tonight God is in the house." In addition, Russian composer Sergei Rachmaninoff, after hearing Tatum play, claimed he was the greatest piano player in any style. Other luminaries of the day such as Artur Schnabel and George Gershwin marveled at Tatum's genius. Charlie Parker (who helped develop bebop) was highly influenced by Tatum.

When newly arrived in New York, Parker briefly worked as a dishwasher in a Manhattan restaurant where Tatum happened to be performing, and often listened to the legendary pianist. Parker once said "I wish I could play like Tatum's right hand!" When Oscar Peterson first heard a recording of Tatum playing he was so intimidated by what he heard that he allegedly restrained himself from touching the piano for nearly two months. Peterson claimed that Tatum the best jazz instrumentalist of all time. Legend has it that classical pianist Vladimir Horowitz

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was so awed by Tatum's wizardry that it brought him to tears; he also is to have said that it was fortunate for classical pianists that Tatum did not choose to pursue a classical career. In 1993, an MIT student invented a term that is now in common usage in the field of computational musicology: The Tatum. It means "the smallest perceptual time unit in music."

Arthur pochodził z bardzo muzycznej rodziny i od dziecka uczył się grać na pianinie i czytać nuty (mimo iż urodził się z bardzo poważną wadą wzroku). Jako nastolatek grał zarobkowo w Toledo. Na krótko dołączył do grupy Speed Webb (1926), głównie jednak występował jako solista lub grywał z małymi zespołami (np. Lee Simsa) w klubach i w radiu. Akompaniował wokalistce Adelaide Hall w czasie jej trasy koncertowej w 1932 r. Pojechał z nią wówczas do Nowego Jorku, a rok później dokonał swych pierwszych nagrań płytowych.

Reputację doskonałego, impresyjnego oraz improwizującego pianisty budował występując w klubach w Cleveland (1934-35) i Chicago (1935-35). W 1937 r. powrócił do Nowego Jorku gdzie grając w klubach, w radiu oraz nagrywając płyty zyskiwał spore uznanie i popularność. Odbił szereg tras koncertowych po USA, pojawił się również w Wielkiej Brytanii. Razem z basistą Slamem Stewartem i gitarzystą Tinym Grimesem założył na początku lat 40. trio, które cieszyło się wielkim uznaniem. Zespół ten przeszedł do historii jako jeden z pierwszych, nowoczesnych zespołów eksponujących przede wszystkim pianistę.

Tatum grywał zarówno w prestiżowej Metropolitan Opera House (1944), jak i w klubach, w radiu i w filmie ("The Fabulous Dorseys", 1947). W 1953 r. podpisał umowę nagraniową z Normanem Granzem, producentem Clef (później Verve i Pablo) Records, dla którego zrealizował wybitne albumy solowe (cykl "The Solo Masterpieces") oraz serię płyt z najwybitniejszymi jazzmanami: Bennym Carterem, Royem Eldridge'em, Benem Websterem, Buddym DeFranco, Lionelem Hamptonem (cykl "The Group Masterpieces"). Był niedoścignionym wykonawcą, wręcz wirtuozem, i wywarł ogromny wpływ na nowojorską scenę jazzową wczesnych lat 30. i 40. Nawet Fats Waller – uznany mistrz i artysta, którego Tatum sam słuchał u progu swej muzycznej kariery, docenił jego fenomenalny talent i gdy zauważył go wśród publiczności w czasie jednego ze swoich koncertów, ogłosił ze sceny: "Bóg jest dzisiaj z nami".

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Olśniewające improwizacje klasycznych, jazzowych i przede wszystkim popularnych tematów to już dziś standardy. Muzyczna poprzeczka ustawiona została przez Tatuma niezwykle wysoko, niewielu pianistom (nie tylko jazzowym) udało się osiągnąć ten poziom opanowania instrumentu. Zabawna maniera przywoływania fragmentów innych melodii, irytująca w wykonaniu niewprawnego muzyka, była u Tatuma kolejnym udanym zabiegiem stylistycznym. Nigdy nie próbował osiągnąć efektu kosztem feelingu i swingu, co charakteryzuje niektórych innych wirtuozów.

Talentowi zawdzięcza ogromne sukcesy nagraniowe: sesja dla Granza trwała zaledwie dwa dni, a blisko 70 utworów zostało nagranych "za pierwszym podejściem". Tatum nigdy nie dał się poznać jako muzyk grający wyłącznie dla poklasku. Wszystko, co robił było żywiołowe i spontaniczne, jakby przewidziane tylko na tę jedyną okazję. Pozostaje bezsprzecznie jedną z największych postaci w pianistyce jazzowej, choć czasami pomija się go w szeregach tych, którzy wprowadzili muzykę na nowe tory. Jego nowatorstwo i sposób, w jaki wykorzystywał zawłości harmonii i zaskakujące sekwencje akordów, pozostawiły ślady w muzyce innych innowatorów modern jazzu: od Buda Powella i Herbiego Hancocka po stylistykę Charliego Parkera i Johna Coltrane'a. ---diapazon.pl

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