

Sonny Rollins – Saxophone Jazz Standards (2013)

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01 – Tenor Madness 02 – St. Thomas 03 – Blue 7 04 – Moritat 05 – Doxy 06 – Raincheck
07 – There Are Such Things 08 – Mambo Bounce 09 – I Know 10 – Paradox 11 – Two
Different Worlds 12 – You Don't Know What Love Is 13 – The Stopper 14 – Pent-Up House
15 – My Reverie 16 – In a Sentimental Mood 17 – Count Your Blessings 18 – Kids Know 19 –
Newk's Fadeaway 20 – Silk 'n' Satin 21 – This Love of Mine 22 – With a Song in My Heart 23
– Scoops 24 – Kiss and Run 25 – Ee-Ah 26 – B. Quick 27 – Movin' Out 28 – Solid 29 –
Time On My Hands 30 – When Your Lover Has Gone 31 – No Moe 32 – I've Grown
Accustomed to Her Face 33 – Shadrack 34 – There's No Business Like Show Business 35 –
It's All Right With Me 36 – Strobe Rode 37 – More Than You Know 38 – Swingin' for Bumsy
39 – Valse Hot 40 – I Feel a Song Coming On 41 – Paul's Pal 42 – B. Swift 43 – The Most
Beautiful Girl in the World 44 – Almost Like Being in Love 45 – On a Slow Boat to China 46 –
My Ideal Sonny Rollins is a saxophone colossus.

The revered tenor saxophonist first received that appellation via the name of his 1956 Prestige Records album. Even then, at age 26, the title seemed fitting. He had already played and/or recorded with bebop giants Charlie Parker, Bud Powell, Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk, and J.J. Johnson and had established himself as the prominent young voice on his instrument via recordings and performances as a leader.

The sobriquet has lasted through the years. It recently served as the title of Jazz Times's June 2005 cover story, in which Rollins was interviewed by youthful sax ace Joshua Redman. It was also employed "The Colossus" as the title of Stanley Crouch's fine profile in the May 9, 2005 issue of The New Yorker.

And Rollins has shown himself continually deserving of the honorific. A melodically dynamic and incredibly hard-swinging improviser he has often been called the premier jazz soloist alive his

career has borne a host of excellent recordings and countless memorable live performances.

Without a Song (The 9/11 Concert), Rollins's latest Milestone Records album, will serve to further the saxophonist's reputation as an artist who delivers. The album was recorded at Boston's Berklee Performing Arts Center on September 15, 2001. This was just four days after the saxophonist, staying in his apartment six blocks from the site of the World Trade Center in Lower Manhattan (he mainly lives in upstate New York), witnessed the horrific attacks of 9/11 firsthand. The performance reveals Rollins's use of music to try and help heal the immense wounds left by the attacks.

As Boston-based jazz writer Bob Blumenthal, who attended the concert, observes in his CD liner notes: "Boston, where the hijacked flights originated and so many of the passengers/victims lived, seemed enveloped in desolation. . . . A palpable restraint permeated the atmosphere, and one could sense it in the audience."

Rollins, in shock from the direct experience of the attacks, almost canceled the concert. He was in the street and saw the second tower fall, and was evacuated from his building with his neighbors on September 12. His wife and manager, Lucille, persuaded him to perform. Though he said in an interview that he felt he was "a reluctant troubadour," he seemed to intuit what the listeners needed.

As heard on the album, the saxophonist tells the audience: "Music is the one of the beautiful things of life. . . . Maybe music can help, I don't know, but we have to try something these days." Thunderous, appreciative applause followed.

The music on Without a Song (The 9/11 Concert), Rollins's first live band recording since 1986's G-Man, is inspired, warm, and moving. Joined by bandmates trombonist Clifton Anderson (his nephew), longtime bassist Bob Cranshaw, drummer Perry Wilson, pianist Stephen Scott, and percussionist Kimati Dinizulu, the saxophonist plays with passion and persuasion on his calypso "Global Warming," and four standards the title track, "Why Was I Born?," "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square," and "Where or When." "I'm glad the album is coming out," Rollins said. "It was as if the feeling that permeated the whole country permeated the musicians. Maybe the album will reflect some of that."

Walter Theodore Rollins was born in New York City on September 7, 1930; his name has been incorrectly stated as Theodore Walter, a switch Rollins made in the mid-'50s. A child of music-loving parents of West Indian ancestry, Rollins first played piano then turned to saxophone at around age 7. One of his uncles, Hubert Myers, a professional saxophonist, helped him pick out an alto saxophone. Young Sonny was enthralled. "I used to play for hours and hours at home," the mostly self-taught Rollins recalled recently. "I was in my own world, my own reverie. I did a lot of free association, just ideas that came to my mind, which is why I have told people" what I told Joshua Redman [in Jazz Times] " that I consider myself a free musician."

By age 12, Rollins began to play in groups with "like-minded boys my age," including saxophonist Jackie McLean and drummer Arthur Taylor. He worked his first professional job at age 14. At age 15, enamored by tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins, Rollins bought his first tenor, a King Zephyr. "It was what I wanted," he said. Four years later, Rollins was in the jazz big leagues, recording with singer Babs Gonzales, then trombonist Johnson, and Powell whose Blue Note date also spotlighted trumpet marvel Fats Navarro and fiery drum Roy Haynes. In 1951, Rollins began to record as a leader, first for Prestige. His nine albums, including Saxophone Colossus and Tenor Madness (with John Coltrane) and featuring Monk, McLean, and others, have been collected in the 7-CD set, The Complete Prestige Recordings.

The era also found Rollins working with Davis, Monk, and the Clifford Brown Max Roach band before stepping out as a leader. He also recorded for Blue Note, Riverside, and Contemporary Records. Recordings from the latter two are gathered on The Freelance Years. In 1959, Rollins took a sabbatical from performing to further develop his musicianship. He lived on Manhattan's Lower East Side, and often practiced on the Williamsburg Bridge. He returned to performing in 1962, and released The Bridge (RCA), a classic featuring guitarist Jim Hall and Bob Cranshaw, his bassist almost nonstop ever since. Rollins also later led a quartet with trumpeter Don Cherry and drummer Billy Higgins, both of whom had played with maverick saxman Ornette Coleman; and recorded with his idol, Hawkins. In 1966, he wrote and performed a jazz score for the film, Alfie, and, in 1969, took another sabbatical, this time traveling to India and studying with a guru.

In 1972, with the encouragement and support of Lucille, whom he had met in 1956 in Chicago, and married in 1965, Rollins again returned to performing and recording beginning his up-to-the- present association with Milestone Records. That association has resulted in a bevy of superior recordings that touch on such genres as straight- ahead, funk, pop, and, of course, calypso. Among these are Next Album, Don't Stop the Carnival, G-Man, Sonny Rollins +3, Global Warming, and This Is What I Do. In November 2004, Rollins suffered a tremendous loss when Lucille, who had not fully recovered from a stroke, died. "We were together 48 years," he said. "I miss her." In the wake of Lucille's death, Rollins has maintained his performing

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schedule of 20-25 dates a year, playing recently in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and on Long Island. Listeners have reported that Rollins is playing with characteristic vitality, furthering his position as a musical colossus. --- musicians.allaboutjazz.com

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