

STEREO 9376 RIVERSIDE

*Bill Evans Trio
Sunday at the
Village Vanguard
Featuring Scott La Faro*



Photo: Donald Silverstein

1. **Gloria's Step (take 2) 6:07**
(Scott LaFaro) Orpheum Music (BMI)
2. **My Man's Gone Now 6:24**
(Heyward-Gershwin) WB Music Corp./George Gershwin Music/Ira Gershwin Music/Dubose and Dorothy Heyward Mem. Fund Publ. (ASCAP)
3. **Solar 8:54**
(Miles Davis) Prestige Music (BMI)
4. **Alice in Wonderland (take 2) 8:34**
(Fain-Hilliard) Walt Disney Music Co. (ASCAP)
5. **All of You (take 2) 8:19**
(Cole Porter) Chappell & Co. (ASCAP)
6. **Jade Visions (take 2) 3:46**
(LaFaro) Orpheum Music (BMI)

BONUS TRACKS

7. **Gloria's Step (take 3) 6:57**
(LaFaro) Orpheum Music (BMI)
8. **Alice in Wonderland (take 1) 7:03**
(Fain-Hilliard) Walt Disney Music Co. (ASCAP)
9. **All of You (take 3) 8:05**
(Porter) Chappell & Co. (ASCAP)
10. **Jade Visions (take 1) 4:10**
(LaFaro) Orpheum Music (BMI)

www.concordmusicgroup.com

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RIVERSIDE®

BILL EVANS piano
SCOTT LAFARO bass
PAUL MOTIAN drums

Original album produced by ORRIN KEEPNEWS
Recorded by Dave Jones live at the Village Vanguard,
New York City; June 25, 1961.

Album designed by Ken Deardoff
Cover photography by Donald Silverstein

Reissue produced and annotated by ORRIN KEEPNEWS
Project supervision – NICK PHILLIPS
Editorial – RIKKA ARNOLD
Art direction – LARISSA COLLINS
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(Joe Tarantino Mastering, Berkeley, CA)

**24
BIT**
REMASTERING

**KEEPNEWS
COLLECTION**

Photo © Steve Schapiro



Orrin Keepnews, Scott LaFaro, Bill Evans, and Paul Motian in the Village Vanguard



Photo: © Steve Schapiro

AN OPENING NOTE FROM THE PRODUCER

This is a series of reissues that can be described as largely centered on my incredibly long (even to me) career as a jazz producer. Each of them is of special importance to me—some because of the initial impact they made, others because they have particular personal meaning or may present a performer whose value has not been fully appreciated. Above all they are expressions of the talent—not infrequently the genius—of their featured artist. But I feel no need to downplay the several roles I have had in bringing them into being and in contributing to the careers of some of the most significant jazz performers of our day. For more than a half-century in this incredibly unstable age of jazz activity I have frequently succeeded in finding, recognizing, codding, arguing with, and collaborating with a great variety of talented and occasionally difficult people. On the whole, I am unreasonably and unshakably proud of the results.

The series follows a specific set of ground rules. In each case the original product is preserved—cover art, the notes, and the entire initial recorded content, in the exact original sequence—and it is now presented with the sonic benefits of 24-bit remastering from the original master tapes. Alternate takes or originally unissued numbers, when available, appear as bonus tracks. In some instances I've added to the total lineup a never-used version that may have been recorded forty or more years ago. When that occasionally allows you to hear for the first time a "new" performance by a long-departed artist, be aware that I join you in considering this a truly wonderful addition. Finally, I have written a complete set of new commentaries, digging back into my memories of those often very good old days to tell a few more stories about this remarkable music and its people.

Just because I am a writer-critic in the jazz field doesn't mean that I can't enjoy an album like any layman. It is true that when one is forced to listen to "x" amount of LPs every week, there are times when the spirit can become hostile toward the very thought of records. But, fortunately, the most effective antidote to this *malaise de vinyl* lies adjacent to the trouble source itself. There is nothing more healing than good music.

Whenever a new Bill Evans album is issued, another weapon has been added to my arsenal of therapy against boredom, fatigue, irritation, or what-have-you. I have all his trio albums (this does not make me unique) but I have never written about him at length in any professional capacity.

Everybody Digs Bill Evans was used as one of his album titles and the phrase became a literalism. So much has been printed in praise of Bill that it is difficult to express positive thoughts about him without quoting some other critic, either directly or indirectly.

One writer who did an excellent job of capturing Evans, the man, was Don Nelsen in the December 8, 1960 *Down Beat*. One reason for the piece's success was the cogent statements he managed to draw from the pianist. In one, Bill was talking about Zen and it led to some accurate insights into jazz. Evans said, "Actually I'm not interested in Zen that much, as a philosophy, nor in joining any movements. I don't pretend to understand it. I just find it comforting. And very similar to jazz. Like jazz, you can't explain it to anyone without losing the experience. It's got to be experienced, because it's feeling not words. Words are the children of reason and, therefore, can't explain it. They really can't translate feeling because they're not part of it. That's why it bugs me when people try to analyze jazz as an intellectual theorem. It's not. It's feeling."

Anyone who has experienced the playing of Bill Evans is aware of his deep feelings and the great clarity with which he communicates them. Also evident to the listener who has followed Evans's progress on *Riverside* is the constant striving for a real group projection where each man improvises and all three do it together. Most trios consist of bassist and drummer supplying rhythmic backing for a pianist. Here, there is an interrelation of melodic and rhythmic phrases actively involving everyone. The freshness of the Evans trio's approach produces music with a truly magical aura.

In listening to the present album, I find myself so absorbed that consciousness of my body disappears and I become as one large ear, equipped only with a psyche. I am not aware of the act of listening. I am suffused by the music and become one with the music. Evans's comment—"It's feeling"—has never been more graphically presented.

The regular Sunday matinees at New York's Village Vanguard have earned a wide reputation as attracting the most genuinely interested jazz audiences to be found at any time or place. Considering the nature of Evans as an artist (as expressed, for example, in the Nelsen article above), it seems extremely fitting that *Sunday at the Village Vanguard* is Bill's first "live" recording. For the first time it brings him to his LP public in the type of extended and spontaneous performances that can result from such a club atmosphere. Of the six selections, only one runs under six minutes and three exceed eight minutes in length. This enables the trio to really explore each piece. As is usual with an Evans recital, the program is rich and varied. He continues several of his personal traditions here. One of these is the inclusion of a song written by Miles Davis. Here it is "Solar," which has everyone stretching out—and it is as if you are discovering the very process of improvisation as they do. There are two Evans customs combined in the use of "All of You": it is by Cole Porter, a standard composer to whom he turns quite frequently, and his version is phrased in an extremely personal—you might even say "impressionistic"—way. It's sort of a distilled essence of the tune, with the melody never once directly stated, an approach to ballads that Bill has been making increasingly frequent use of. And in offering us "Alice in Wonderland" (from the Walt Disney film production) he once again treats us to the reworking of a piece of trivia and banality (previously, he did the same with "Someday My Prince Will Come," from *Snow White*) into a wondrous musical experience.

Gershwin is represented here by an unbelievably poignant version of "My Man's Gone Now." Evans has a caressing, exquisitely beautiful exposition, while LaFaro contributes brooding underlinings and a thrilling solo.

While this album contains no Evans originals, there are instead two by LaFaro. "Gloria's Step" has an arresting line and harmonic structure, with perfect creative balance among the three men. Evans's solo is a composition in itself, Motian swings dynamically with his brushes, and the composer's solo is truly brilliant. Scott's "Jade Visions" is a piece of sensitive calligraphy with an Oriental cast. His tremendous overall contribution to this album makes his death all the more tragic. I am content that there exists for me, as a listener, these recorded results of a momentous *Sunday at the Village Vanguard*.

—Ira Gitler

The six selections that make up this album were recorded on the afternoon and night of June 25, 1961—the final performances of a two-week stand at the Vanguard for the Bill Evans Trio. (Specifically, the version of Scott LaFaro's "Jade Visions" that concludes the album was the last number they played that evening.) As it turned out, this was to be the last time together for these three musicians. For it was only ten days later that LaFaro was killed in a tragic highway accident.

It was a shocking death—as is all death, and sudden death in particular. To us so deeply involved in jazz, the loss of a young man in the very midst of the process of realizing what were generally recognized as really major potentials on his instrument, is all the more tragic. For Bill Evans and Paul Motian, who had worked so closely with Scott for most of the past two years, it was the double loss of both a friend and a vitally important fellow-musician. I had asked Bill to write a few words about Scott and their association to be printed in this space. He tried, but not too surprisingly found that he simply could not. I cannot really substitute for Bill here, but having heard this trio countless times, and having supervised three sets of their recording sessions, I am very much aware of the strong, unusual, and richly creative interrelation between Evans and LaFaro, and of the way in which they stimulated, challenged, and assisted each other towards the development of an approach they considered far more rewarding than the conventional "lead voice plus two rhythm" of most piano-trio jazz.

I know that the Vanguard engagement as a whole was musically a highly satisfying one to the group and that they were all pleased with the overall results of the last day's recording. In our assembling of this album, Bill's preferences were influenced by a desire to emphasize Scott's contributions, but I don't think sentiment interfered with judgment there. The album does happen to be one that can stand as a fitting memorial to the abbreviated career of a talented bassist. Bill has said he'd like to think of it as "dedicated" to Scott by him. I'd prefer to put it that this LP can serve as a permanent reminder of not only how much, but also why, Scott LaFaro will be deeply missed by Bill Evans, and indeed by everyone who ever heard him play.

—Orrin Keepnews

These notes appeared on the original album liner.

Sunday at the Village Vanguard — REVISITED

This reissue begins by presenting remastered updatings of the six selections that made up the 1961 Riverside album called Sunday at the Village Vanguard, which was the first of the two albums that resulted from the final performances by the first Bill Evans working trio. These are followed by alternate-take versions of selections that further emphasize Scott LaFaro's contribution to the album, making this a most suitable final presentation of the intensity of the collaboration between these two artists.

I first became professionally caught up in jazz at almost exactly the mid-point of the Twentieth Century, at just about the start of a period that has rather ambiguously continued to be described as the “modern” jazz era. Since I remain quite doggedly involved with the music almost sixty years later (I am writing these notes not too long before the end of the first decade of the next century), it would appear that jazz and I have become permanently attached. Several of the artists I have been involved with over the years have turned out to be quite significant leaders in the ongoing development of this form of musical creativity. Accordingly, there definitely remains a considerable amount of interest in quite a few examples of my early work as a producer, and by now I am fully resigned to the fact that I am never going to be able to entirely close the book on my past.

I must admit that I have never been able to make up my mind as to which of a number of legendary artists should be considered—well, the only way to put it is—*most* legendary. In many ways, I have to acknowledge that Thelonious Monk will always be a major candidate for this distinction—he had the proper look, the colorful wardrobe, the collection of hats, and the revolutionary credentials as one of the pioneers of the new music that took hold in the Forties. But in some respects Monk was too much of a challenge, virtually impossible for his contemporaries to emulate, and too individual a stylist to be readily accessible as a role model. Bill Evans, on the other hand, although his creativity was a constant challenge to those around him, was so extremely non-threatening as a player that many who were most strongly influenced by him seemed to feel (and some have even expressed it in very much this way) that he was welcoming you to share his approach. He clearly was more than merely comfortable with the modal experiments that became such an important part of the music of Miles Davis and John Coltrane; and by utilizing it without any of the hard edges that were important elements in their work, he made it more widely accessible.

But possibly his most intriguing contribution was a result of his early-Sixties collaboration with the remarkable and tragically short-lived young bassist, Scott LaFaro. They had found each other in the period just after Evans left the Miles Davis environment. Beginning what would be a total commitment to performing in clubs only in a trio context, Bill had taken what must have been a thoroughly nerve-racking job at a high-pressure midtown New York room irreverently named Basin Street East. The featured act was a latter-day Benny Goodman band; the Evans trio was there strictly as a so-called “relief band,” to fill the intermissions. During

their first night of work, Bill was promptly asked not to let his drummer—who on that occasion happened to be Philly Joe Jones—take any solos; the pianist eventually began to put his sets to best-possible use by auditioning a series of bass players.

When a particular young bassist he had known only slightly stayed around for a couple of sets, and Bill then asked him to return, the experiment had a very happy ending, becoming the start of an almost two-year collaboration. It has never been clear to me whether Evans at this point was already seeking to develop a concept that most pianists certainly would not have been comfortable with—the idea of treating a trio as a joint creative venture, rather than as a vehicle for a piano player who was carrying two rhythmic assistants. There is no direct evidence that any such idea preceded his earliest work with LaFaro, but Paul Motian, who had played on Bill's first Riverside album and was his long-time regular drummer starting at about this time, has indicated that it was on their agenda and had already begun to be part of the working pattern.

Their first album together was made at the very end of 1959 and issued as *Portrait in Jazz*. Eventually there were three more LPs before the highway accident in upstate New York early in July of 1961 that brought LaFaro's barely-begun career to a tragic close. The first of those, *Explorations*, was recorded in one session, on February 2, 1961. The title—although I'm pretty sure it was invented by me—does indicate an awareness that they were moving in new directions.

Bill was attracting a good deal of attention; he was not yet a noticeably selling artist, but from the start he had been a favorite of most critics. There was also the attention he had gained in 1958 as the only white musician to then have the unqualified approval of Miles Davis, including being invited back—just after actually leaving the band—to play on almost the entire acclaimed *Kind of Blue* album. I had not been at all concerned by the thirteen-month gap between the first two working-group albums; after all, there had been a much longer delay (from the fall of 1956 until December 1958) between his first two projects as a leader.

But the actual making of *Explorations* left me quite disturbed. It was clear from the start of the recording session that there was a great deal of tension between Evans and his young, much-acclaimed bass player. Back at the start of Bill's tenure with Miles, I had of course realized that working closely with Philly Joe would expose this extremely sensitive and insecure young man to some very strong pressures. But Miles had fired Joe no more than six weeks later; and I had as yet seen no indication that the drummer had drawn Bill into any drug-related activity. (I was indeed very wrong; heroin and then cocaine had already begun to become major factors in Bill's life and, except for some very brief respites, were at war with his remarkable creativity until, pretty much worn out at just past the age of fifty, he died in September of 1980.)

I was at first simply aware of considerable personal friction between the two men; then Evans started to complain that he was developing a headache. After a while the root cause came into the open: the trio was about to be going on the road and Scottie was letting his leader (and anyone else within earshot) know that he had to be paid more than had orig-

inally been agreed on. The clearly-expressed premise was: if I'm going to be going across the country with a junkie as my bandleader, I need to protect myself as much as possible from being stranded on the road. It wasn't too sensible; it surely was a problem that was not going to be solved verbally in the studio and it certainly was not helping with the immediate task of making a record. Bill deserved most of the credit for getting us safely through this day by refusing to continue the argument, and to Scott's credit he also eventually backed off. And somehow, when Evans and I got around to reviewing the session tapes, we discovered that it all sounded a great deal better than we had thought it would. However, my expectations had drastically changed; rather than a long-range creative partnership, I had to anticipate a trio that might blow up at any time—and which surely could not be expected to last for the year or more that almost inevitably would elapse before the finicky pianist felt ready to record again. While I really didn't consider him a prime candidate for the looser and more spontaneous approach of a “live” date, it did seem that that was what might be necessary.

So when we learned that the trio would very shortly be booked into the Village Vanguard for two weeks (one week or less has by now become the universal playing time in most jazz venues; maybe attention spans were longer in the mid-1900s), I started to push for recording in performance at the club during that time. Even though this would call for making another album only a few months after *Explorations*, Bill offered no real objections. There actually were several positive factors. The trio would be spending most of the intervening time on the road, which in effect meant almost nightly live rehearsals of their new approach and an extensive opportunity to gauge audience reactions both to their interplay and to a largely new repertoire. In addition, ever since the overwhelming success of the Cannonball Adderley quintet's first Riverside album, taped in a San Francisco club in the fall of 1959, I had been an outspoken enthusiast for such things.

And the Vanguard itself, although it had only switched to a jazz policy a half dozen years earlier, already had a solid reputation. It was a comfortable, well-run place; musicians felt at ease there, and somehow its odd triangular shape resulted in a warm sound that apparently was most acceptable to both players and record listeners. I had been a regular customer since I was a teenager, knew and liked both the owner, the legendary Max Gordon, and his wife Lorraine (who still runs the place, which must be an unbeatable length of tenure among jazz clubs anywhere). Actually, having recorded a Junior Mance album in the Vanguard early in 1961, I felt most confident about working there.

The performances that make up this collection were all set down on tape on a single afternoon and evening in 1961. Sunday matinees were pretty much the rule at that time, so that by only once going through the awkward process of setting up our equipment in what was, after all, a deep basement, it became possible to record five full sets. As it turned out, we were also exposing ourselves to a couple of high risk factors. One was that a choice had to be made between Sundays; it seemed most logical to wait for the second weekend, thus allowing maximum time for making definite repertoire choices, but that meant working on the very last day of the engagement,

leaving no room to recover if things went less than perfectly. The other was that our staff engineer, Ray Fowler, was not available. Not only am I now unable to recall the reason for his absence, but I find no explanation in any of my previous writing about this session, and I'm unable to inquire, as Ray died a few years ago. The most likely explanation is probably that Fowler, who had a large family, had previously-scheduled vacation time. His replacement, Davy Jones, was quite experienced and more than capable—having recorded material ranging from Dixieland dates for a label of his own to folk singers in the earliest days of the Elektra label.

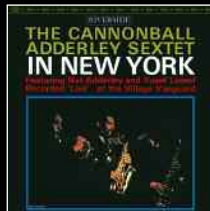
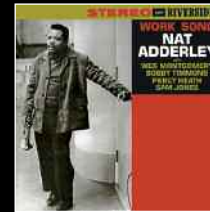
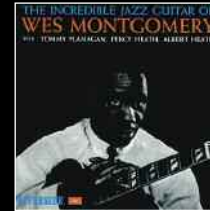
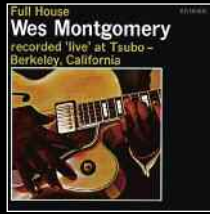
We did have one brief immediate cause for alarm: early in the taping of the very first number of the afternoon, there was a sudden, never-explained power outage at the Vanguard. But in less than a minute, all returned to normal—and stayed that way to the very end of the evening. I had introduced one variant factor: we were certainly not looking for more than one record, but I wanted to avoid the possibly numbing effect of repeating the no more than six or seven pre-selected numbers during an entire working afternoon-and-night. So a full performing schedule of thirteen selections had been established, and as the day progressed, it became increasingly clear that this was a consistently remarkable occasion. Everything was working well; the three-way interaction was being achieved; the only room for doubt concerned what should be omitted. As a final touch, the last set ended with their very first playing of one question-mark number, a new LaFaro piece that he called “Jade Visions.” It had been immediately followed by a second take, played more for themselves than for the departing remnants of the audience—and that turned out to be the version we would initially issue.

It also seemed immediately clear that my idea of recording more selections than we would use had been outdone by reality. The overall level of performance made it both unnecessary and pointless to consider setting aside any selections. But by late July, when Evans and I got together at the Riverside offices to listen and evaluate album choices, the whole picture had taken a drastic negative turn. The late-night automobile accident in which Scott died came just ten days after the creative triumph of those Vanguard “live” performances, turning them with shocking swiftness into a memorial. Evans was severely shaken—it would be the following spring before he was able to return to a working schedule with a new bassist. But his immediate reaction was to describe quite specifically his plans for these recordings. He wanted to release without delay an album that would focus on LaFaro's contributions to this project. There would be six selections; two would be “Jade Visions” and “Gloria's Step,” and all the others would include bass solos. And it was on that basis that we were able to prepare this album for its initial release. The original notes, reproduced in this booklet, include four paragraphs describing the circumstances and noting that back then Evans had tried but failed to write something. I suggest that you look at my words now; they do a better job than I could at this time of bringing things to a close.

—ORRIN KEEPNEWS

May 2008

KEEP NEWS COLLECTION



Bill Evans Trio Sunday at the Village Vanguard

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The trio, between sets, in the back room at the Vanguard.

In listening to the present album, I find myself so absorbed that consciousness of my body disappears and I become as one large ear, equipped only with a psyche. I am not aware of the act of listening. I am suffused by the music and become one with the music. Evans' comment — "It's feeling" — has never been more graphically presented.

The regular Sunday matinees at New York's Village Vanguard have earned a wide reputation as attracting the most

BILL EVANS, piano; SCOTT LaFARO, bass; PAUL MOTIAN, drums. Recorded 'live' at the Village Vanguard, New York City; June 25, 1961.

Bill Evans' other *Riverside* albums include—*Explorations* (RLP 351; Stereo 9351); *Portrait in Jazz* (RLP 315; Stereo 1162); *Everybody Digs Bill Evans* (RLP 291; Stereo 1129); *New Jazz Conceptions* (RLP 223).

SIDE 1

1. Gloria's Step (6:05) (Scott LaFaro)
2. My Man's Gone Now (6:21) (George & Ira Gershwin)
3. Solar (8:51) (Miles Davis)

SIDE 2

1. Alice in Wonderland (8:32) (Fain-Hilliard)
2. All of You (8:20) (Cole Porter)
3. Jade Visions (3:46) (Scott LaFaro)

genuinely interested jazz audiences to be found at any time or place. Considering the nature of Evans as an artist (as expressed, for example, in the Nelsen piece article above), it seems extremely fitting that "Sunday at the Village Vanguard" is Bill's first "live" recording. For the first time it brings him to his LP public in the type of extended and spontaneous performances that can result from such a club atmosphere. Of the six selections, only one runs under six minutes and three exceed eight minutes in length. This enables the trio to really explore each piece.

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—IRA GITLER

PRODUCED BY ORRIN KEEPNEWS. RECORDING ENGINEER: DAVE JONES. MASTERED AT PLAZA SOUND STUDIOS. ALBUM DESIGNED BY KEN DEARDOFF. BACK-LINER PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE SCHAPIRO.

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