

ALEXANDER THE GREAT—Monty Alexander (Pacific Jazz 86)—The Esquire Theater in Los Angeles and the enthusiastic audience at an early morning "after hours" concert provide the background for Alexander's record debut. Richard Bock, Pacific Jazz president, couldn't have selected a better time or place for he captures the 21-year-old Jamaica native in a swinging, imaginative mood. Alexander employs a light touch, a strong rhythmic impulse, and a reasonable amount of originality in this handsome effort. His style shows strong touches of Ahmad Jamal and several others, but he has a lot going for himself. His biggest problem now is eliminating the cliches and "show-boating" that creep into his work. His best work here comes on "Jitterbug Waltz" (which Fats Waller made popular in 1942), his own spirited "The Grabber," a pretty rendition of "Autumn Leaves," and a spirited "Blues for Jilly" (Alexander is another graduate of Jilly's New York night club). Also included are "John Brown's Body," "Comin' Home Baby," and "I've Never Been in Love Before."