

Acclaimed jazz pianists add to stature on Concord LPs

JAMES WILLIAMS — "Arioso Touch" — (Concord)

STAN GETZ — "Pure Getz" — (Concord)

MONTY ALEXANDER — "Triple Treat" — (Concord)

In his first recording in a trio setting, James Williams not only enhances his stature as one of the best new pianists around, he also sets down some solid credentials as a composer.

Williams first drew critical acclaim as a member of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, where his high-powered modernistic approach was very much appreciated.

On his own, Williams achieves a blend of his drive and a lyric touch which revitalize standard ballads such as "Remember," "I Didn't Know About You" and "You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To" while retaining their melodic appeal.

His originals, "Arioso" and a tribute to "Phineas (Newborn): The Living Legend," are appealing uptempo tunes

review

treated with total authority. A blues, "Judge For Yourself," provides an opportunity for the busy bass of Buster Williams and the drums of Billy Higgins to get further involved.

Another pianist drawing attention of late is James McNeely, a member of the Mel Lewis big band who also did some smaller-group recordings with trombonist Bob Brookmeyer.

Now, he is chief collaborator with Stan Getz on recordings made last January in San Francisco and last February in New York — dates on which the veteran tenor sax star sounds better than he has in a long time.

A highlight is Getz's haunting interpretation of Billy Strayhorn's last com-

position, "Blood Count," with McNeely providing stark accents to the lyrical solo.

McNeely urges Getz to fiery heights in the album opener, "On the Up and Up," the pianist's curious mix of bossa nova and Thelonius Monk. Bop era standards "Tempus Fugit" by Bud Powell and Miles Davis' "Sipping at Bell's" are handled well by the quartet, which includes bassist Marc Johnson and drummers Victor Lewis and Billy Hart.

McNeely opts for a linear solo of rapid runs on Bill Evans' "Very Early," a ¾-time ballad which normally would suggest a lot of chords.

Getz, of course, is best known for his interpretations of standard ballads. "Pure Getz" has no title tune, but his rendering of "Come Rain or Come Shine" fills the bill nicely.

The Jamaican-born Monty Alexander is an established jazz pianist who proved to

be a superb accompanist in two recent Concord albums featuring the voice of Ernestine Anderson.

Now, he rejoins guitarist Herb Ellis and bassist Ray Brown, who collaborated on an earlier "Trio" album for Concord.

The latest session, recorded in Japan last March, has produced a real winner in a laid-back version of Benny Carter's "When Lights Are Low."

A recording by the Nat Cole Trio 40 years ago serves as the inspiration for an updated version of "Body And Soul." "Sweet Lady" is a lovely ballad penned by Alexander, featuring Brown's arco bass.

Alexander reverts to his calypso roots on Blue Mitchell's "Fungi Mama."

The album opens with the theme from "The Flintstones" cartoon show. Ellis and Brown already recorded the tune on two previous occasions. Alexander had the dubious honor of being invited to the third go-around. Yabadabadoo.

TEK TALMONT