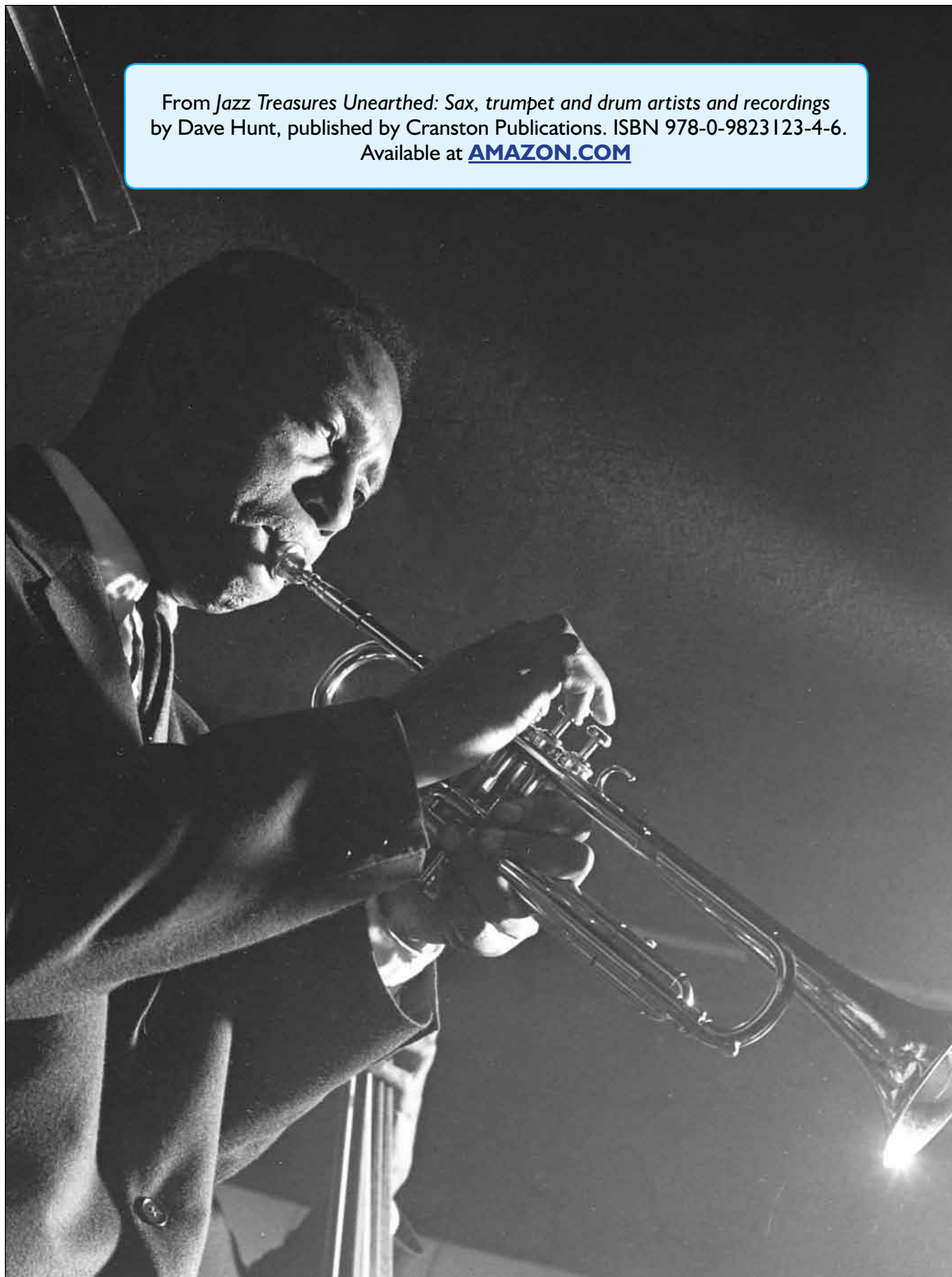


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CHUCK STEWART

≈ Kenny Dorham ≈

CHAPTER

6

Kenny Dorham: Music Reigning Supreme

Key Facts About the Trumpeter and Composer-Leader

- Born August 30, 1924, in Fairfield, Texas, into a musical family
- Took piano lessons starting at age 7 but switched to trumpet while attending high school in Austin
- Joined the army in 1942 and came under the influence of trumpeter Russell Jacquet, the older brother of tenor saxist Illinois Jacquet
- Moved, after leaving the army, to New York City, where, beginning in 1945, he performed with Dizzy Gillespie's band as well as those of Billy Eckstine, Lionel Hampton and Mercer Ellington
- Replaced Miles Davis in Charlie Parker's group in 1948, remaining until 1950
- Served with Art Blakey and Horace Silver as one of the Jazz Messengers beginning in 1954
- Replaced Clifford Brown in the Max Roach-Clifford Brown Quintet in 1956 upon Brown's death
- Met tenor saxist Joe Henderson in 1962 and began a mutually beneficial musical relationship that resulted in several Blue Note recordings that represent some of the trumpeter's finest work
- Recorded in the late 1960s, as the highlight of his later years, with bari saxist Cecil Payne
- Taught briefly at Lenox School of Jazz (1958-59) and, shortly before his death, at New York University School of Music
- Died December 5, 1972, in New York City of kidney disease at age 48

Compositions that are revered by his peers: "Blue Bossa," "Prince Albert," "Lotus Blossom," "Una Mas," "Whistle Stop," "Short Story," "La Mesha," "Sunrise in Mexico," "Windmill," "Buffalo," "Sunset," "El Matador"

Website: kennydorham.webs.com

The Jazz Trumpet Hierarchy and Kenny Dorham

Louis Armstrong, to this day, remains uppermost in the minds of most jazz historians as a premier artist not only for his extraordinary technical command of his horn, but also because he communicated art – as well as entertainment – to the largest audience segment of any trumpeter in jazz history. **Bix Beiderbecke**, thought to be a close challenger in the traditional stylistic era, was also an artist of significant stature as a pure improviser but lacked Armstrong's performance charisma.

Henry "Red" Allen and Ellington sidemen **Rex Stewart** and **Cootie Williams** are three trumpeters who, by the late 1930s, furthered the lineage of speech-inflected jazz (talking to the listener). All three were underappreciated, unfortunately, probably because of how they colored their improvisational language instead of adhering to the predominant rhythm-dominated concepts of swing.

Although certainly capable of speech-inflected communication, **Roy "Little Jazz" Eldridge** is a perfect example of a powerhouse rhythmic player that most listeners identified with by the time of his Gene Krupa big band and small group association beginning in the 1940s. His counterpart, **Charlie "Small Jazz" Shavers**, could take the tops of listeners' heads right off with

technical acrobatics, even though musical substance occasionally deserted him.

From the mid-1940s through the decade of the 1950s, four wonderfully gifted artists dominated the jazz trumpet world:

- **Dizzy Gillespie:** As the alter ego of bebop innovator Charlie Parker, he is the trumpeter thought to have possessed the most technical skills in the history of jazz. His evolutionary contributions and ability to improvise conceptually complex solos should not be minimized, however.
- **Miles Davis:** A jazz icon by the late 1950s, he had made a successful self-imposed transition from rhythm-dominated performance to a speech-inflected style earlier in the decade. It elevated him to the top of the jazz world, and deservedly so.
- **Fats Navarro:** Viewed as an ideal improviser as a result of his ability to combine Dizzy's technical stance with Miles' penchant for communication, he regrettably did not live past 1950.
- **Clifford Brown:** With a technical and conceptual command of jazz creativity that is still considered the definitive approach to 1950s bebop and hard bop styles, Brown became the ideal that Navarro would have been had he lived long enough to

MILES DAVIS AND KENNY DORHAM are two prominent trumpeters who, though regarded as less technically resplendent than Dizzy Gillespie, Fats Navarro and Clifford Brown, were tremendously appealing conceptually. By the end of the 1950s, as we now know, Miles' reputation would overshadow that of all the others because of daring and influential musicality enhanced by an artistic charisma.

The contributions of Dorham to the stylistic evolution of jazz in the 1950s were no less valid, but his popularity couldn't begin to approach the enormity of Miles' fan base and remained limited to fellow artists, selected critics, older educators, historians and a fan following steeped in mid-20th century jazz evolution. In view of Dorham's unshakable musical integrity, he does represent, though, the breed of artist who is now a disappearing rarity.

His whole jazz life was a proclamation of the *paramount importance of the music in the creative process and the reality that an overabundance of technical facility often carries with it the temptation to let fingers substitute for the prominence of the mind.*

Dorham's conceptual development periods are crucial to understanding his music and will be divided and analyzed as follows:

- Late 1940s: The Bird Apprenticeship
- The 1950s: Art Blakey-Max Roach Years
- Early 1960s: A Joe Henderson Collaboration on Blue Note
- Late 1960s: The Later Career Years

For each period, a critique of the trumpeter's music will be a central focus, as well as the correlation between how well he actually performed and how successfully

fulfill his promise. Brown, also, unfortunately, died prematurely.

In the 1960s, jazz trumpet soared to more diverse heights in the hands of four other players:

- **Lee Morgan:** The young technical wizard of the mid-to-late 1950s, he opted successfully for a Miles Davis-influenced speech-inflected stance.
- **Freddie Hubbard:** After becoming a sought-after recording artist, his only drawback was a tendency to get caught up in occasional finger-exercising technical effects.
- **Booker Little:** While his approach to contemporary harmonic interpretation and his technical skills in the avant-garde mode were the talk of jazz trumpet, he didn't live far enough into the 1960s to be fully recognized.
- **Woody Shaw:** Maturing out of the finger-busting aspect of improv, he became an artist for whom finding enviable notes became a supreme creative challenge.

Since the early 1980s, we cannot fail to recognize the contribution to all of music that **Wynton Marsalis** has made. Technical precision, conceptual command, historical perspective – he's got it all. Of the foremost trumpeters of the last 20 years, **Roy Hargrove** exemplifies the fiery performer with all kinds of chops that jazz listeners have always preferred.

In perusing that abundance of trumpet talent and skipping across the stylistic landscape, we cannot assess Dorham technically in the same league with El-dridge, Gillespie, Brown, Little or Marsalis. Nor did he approach the level of speech-inflected communication of Armstrong and Miles.

Instead, **Kenny Dorham** must be considered an artist whose evolving trademark was a quest for those elusive *musical* notes in harmonic interpretation, notes that were unusual for their uniquely distinctive chordal selection. He had the technique he needed to live up to his potential, and many of the recordings reviewed here testify to that fact.

Of the artists mentioned in this survey, he is probably closest to Beiderbecke, Miles and Navarro, but there is no defined line of influence between him and these three historical figures. It is known how much Dorham admired Gillespie, but, like Miles, he realized early on that he was never going to perform at that technical level.

Technique is the mechanics by which improvisational results are achieved, and they are inevitably bound up in improvised notes. If the criterion for judging how well an artist performs is the quality of those notes created in the harmonic interpretation of any given stylistic era, then Kenny Dorham will certainly rank high on listeners' lists of preferred jazz trumpeters.

he recorded. Gillespie, Navarro and Brown might have structured their improvisations on a higher technical level than did Miles and Dorham, but the latter two compensated for some of the discrepancies in mechanics with a deft conceptual interpretation of equally engaging repertoire. Such wide-ranging musical circumstances happily enable the receptive listener to feast on the work of many soloists and a great variety of jazz offerings.

LATE 1940s: THE BIRD APPRENTICESHIP

Dorham's apprenticeship with the innovative Charlie Parker during 1948 and 1949 became the pivotal artistic relationship from which he made critical strides in both conception and technique. As a privileged front-line partner to Bird's revolutionary rhythmic, melodic and harmonic language, the trumpeter obviously held

a student status, but Navarro and Miles had both paid similar dues with Parker. Only Gillespie was critically acclaimed as Bird's musical and artistic equal.

Right at the outset, it must be pointed out that Dorham's conceptual thought processes and technical execution were uneven on Parker's recordings. Intermittent audio glimpses lasting 4, 8, 12 or even 16 bars often foreshadowed the magnificent improviser he would become by the mid-1950s, but also much in evidence were his struggles to maintain desired proficiency. For the most part, bebop originals, blues and standard tunes revealed his ongoing determination to develop a tight compatibility with Bird's startlingly new language.

This stretching of creative resources to fit an innovative stylistic niche became standard operating procedure for supporting artists who placed the highest professional premium on associating with Parker. It eventually gave

them not only a performance diploma from the 52nd Street university of bebop but also the artistic prestige of having been one of Bird's chosen accompanists. In addition to Dorham, Miles and Navarro, that same conceptual and technical maturation can be heard in the solo and ensemble work of trumpeters Howard McGhee, Red Rodney and Chet Baker, who also shared small group horn configurations with the alto saxist over widely varying lengths of time.

What's more, there have been few artists on any instrument in their early-to-mid 20s – as were Miles, Rodney and Baker – who have totally arrived artistically by that age. This level of maturity becomes more understandable given the magnitude of the creative challenges Parker had placed before these developing supporting players.

Miles, however, may have been the one trumpeter at Dorham's artistic level in the late 1940s and early 1950s who had a distinct conceptual, if not technical, advantage over him. Even in his early 20s, Miles had already begun to realize that he would never fit the technically inspired mold of either Gillespie or Navarro. When he began to edit the note choices in his harmonic interpretation into a more economy-of-scale execution format, his thought clarity increased greatly. By approaching improvisation with melodic similarities to what Dorham was playing, Miles, with his lean-notes approach, reduced his margin of technical error and boosted his performance confidence immeasurably. As a result, he advanced a once tentative execution into the realm of stylistic maturity.

Dorham continued to develop in the early 1950s, clearly utilizing a technique based on more note density than Miles' without feeling any need for note economy. Understandably, Miles' dramatic emergence on the international scene with his classic quintet in the mid-1950s (John Coltrane, tenor sax; Red Garland, piano; Paul Chambers, bass; Philly Joe Jones, drums) got Dorham's serious attention during his Art Blakey-Max Roach years.

Not surprisingly, K.D. even came under Miles' conceptual influence for a brief time, as did approximately a third of all the well-known trumpeters in the mid-to-late 1950s. Many, like Chet Baker, Wilbur Hardin (who recorded with Coltrane), Shorty Rogers, Jack Sheldon and Webster Young (who recorded on Prestige), displayed a prominent likeness. Others, like Nat Adderley, Donald Byrd and Art Farmer, exhibited only secondary influences.

Documenting the Work in Progress

With regard to Dorham's uneven performances with

Parker, the following CD serves as a prime example:

Charlie Parker: *All Stars Live at the Royal Roost*. Arpeggio, September, December 1948, March 1949. *Charlie Parker, alto sax; Al Haig, piano; Tommy Potter, bass; Max Roach, drums. Special guests: Milt Jackson, vibes; Lucky Thompson, tenor sax.*

A summary of selected tracks from this CD gives listeners these technical glimpses of Dorham's development:

- “Barbados,” “Cheryl” and “Chasin’ the Bird” all show marked improvement in execution over Dorham's mid-1940s sessions. A great groove is established on the latter.
- “Anthropology” is played at a tempo still too fast to enable Dorham to generate superb ideas.
- “Half Nelson” contains conceptual uncertainty and a technical edginess that mar his solo.
- “A Night in Tunisia” has an insecure break from which Dorham never fully recovers.
- “Scrapple From the Apple” shows the trumpeter attempting an obvious groove that his technique, at this stage of development, fails to fulfill.

These tracks comprise half of a single CD. As a further example of the lack of consistent performance in Dorham's initial development period, let's briefly examine the three CDs of *Complete Royal Roost Live Recordings on Savoy*. [There is a more comprehensive Parker 4-CD set, *Complete Live Performances on Savoy: Sept. 29, 1947-Oct. 25, 1950*, which also includes 1947 Carnegie Hall tracks and selections from Chicago in 1950.] Two details of vital interest are worth noting. First, Miles, not Dorham, is the trumpet player on many of the 1948 tracks. Also, there are personnel changes throughout, which always have a way of affecting performance outcome.

From the Royal Roost performances, the January 15, 1949, tracks “Scrapple From the Apple,” “Be-Bop” and “Hot House,” played by Parker, Dorham, pianist Al Haig, bassist Tommy Potter and drummer Joe Harris, have often been lauded for good reason. There is miraculous Bird on “Hot House” (the stuff that makes sax players wince), and Dorham reacts with the creative attitude of an artist who has just been technically challenged. But, more importantly, the trumpeter's melodicism fully emerges here and will be even more readily apparent in the near future. Parker and Dorham both acquit themselves impressively on each of the other selections.

On tracks recorded after January 15, Dorham is heard building stylistically on his melodic ideas and newfound confidence. But there are certainly intonation, execution and even conceptual setbacks involved in the development process.

Consequently, the following 1940s record dates including Dorham (now released in compilations on Savoy) can be disregarded in a critical evaluation of his work:

- *The Bebop Boys*, Savoy (tracks included in more than one artist or stylistic compilation), September 1946.
- *Opus De Bop*, Savoy (Sonny Stitt quintet tracks), January 1947.

Dorham did record in 1949 other than with Parker, however, and two sessions that reinforce the contention that his development was turning the consistency corner are:

- *Trombone by Three* (J.J. Johnson sextet tracks on a compilation featuring three different groups), OJC/Prestige, May 1949.
- *Milt Jackson: Bluesology* (Milt Jackson-Kenny Clarke sextet tracks), Savoy, January-February 1949.

Ira Gitler, author of the invaluable *Masters of Bebop: A Listener's Guide* (Da Capo Press, 2001), summarized the trumpeter's initial development period in emphatic terms: "Dorham's execution on his earlier recordings ... left much to be desired." He then concluded by stating, "With Parker, Dorham improved even further, and by the time he left the group, he had really tightened up the loose ends."

In the Transition Zone

The dividing line between Dorham's apprenticeship with Bird – in which uncertainty characterized at least a portion of his live and studio output – and the Art Blakey-Max Roach years – when a bebop-hard bop-dominated maturity of extremely personalized sensitivity made him one of the top five trumpeters to hear – seemed to be:

Thelonious Monk: *Genius of Modern Music, Vol. 2* (Thelonious Monk sextet tracks), Blue Note, May 1952. *Thelonious Monk, piano; Lou Donaldson, alto sax; Lucky Thompson, tenor sax; Kenny Dorham, trumpet; Nelson Boyd, bass; Max Roach, drums.*

A brief outline of seven of the nine tracks recorded by this sextet is indicative of Dorham's now steady technical development:

- "Skippy" presents an excellent middle-register solo with disarming articulation.

- "Hornin' In" also contains an excellent middle-register solo.
- "Sixteen" (take 2) has the trumpeter occasionally failing to hit notes squarely.
- "Let's Cool One" showcases a Miles Davis derivative construction that is very satisfying.
- "Skippy" (alternate take) offers another excellent middle-register solo.
- "Hornin' In" (alternate take) reveals a pinched tone from time to time with the solo not quite up to the level of the one on the previous version.
- "Sixteen" (take 1) spotlights a vastly superior solo, technically and conceptually, to the alternate version.

It is extremely interesting, and curious, too, that as appealing as Dorham's solos are in this 1952 sextet session, he plays on a higher level overall and with greater enthusiasm on a May 1949 Charlie Parker quintet setting for the Verve label. [Originally released as *Jazz Perennial*, #7 in the Genius of Charlie Parker series, its various tracks now appear as bits and pieces on several compilation CDs.] In the company of pianist Al Haig, bassist Tommy Potter and drummer Max Roach, the Parker originals "Diverse" and "Passport" become new, additional vehicles for which Dorham has an immediate personal affinity. The difference? He probably felt much more compatible with Parker's music, having so thoroughly immersed himself in it for months, while Monk's music was fresher to him, but problematic because of unfamiliarity.

THE 1950s:

ART BLAKEY-MAX ROACH YEARS

Dorham had played with Art Blakey when they both served as sidemen under Parker's leadership. When Blakey and Horace Silver formed their edition of the Jazz Messengers, their favorable impression of the trumpeter put him high on the list of desired horn men. The association was mutually beneficial, with the trumpeter soon becoming thoroughly compatible within the group's stylistic focus. Max Roach hired the young Dorham as the result of an unfortunate circumstance – the premature and tragic death of Clifford Brown.

At the time, each leader – but especially Blakey – provided a performance training ground for young horn and rhythm section players, and Dorham had the enviable opportunity to work for them both. Playing with Blakey represented an emergence for the trumpeter. With Roach, K.D. was able to solidify his bebop-hard bop reputation.

In this period, the fiery, mature Dorham now much more consistently displayed:

- Accomplished instrumental control
- Personalized stylistic development
- Wide-ranging melodicism, applicable to performance environments encompassing:
 - Bebop and hard bop originals
 - Well-known standards
 - Blues, both historically relevant and newly composed to fit prevailing creative forms
 - Broadway show material
 - Exploratory original compositions
- Honestly felt sensitivity that was directly communicable to listeners

Incorporating these attributes, the recorded Dorham becomes artistically addictive. His often bittersweet improvisations and tonally bent lyricism get inside the listener to the point where intermittent exposure is not enough. But then, it is much the same with his con-

temporaries Clifford Brown, Lee Morgan and Booker Little as well as Freddie Hubbard and Woody Shaw, who emerged later.

Each trumpeter, of course, selects from among those musical tools that best suit his or her creative personality, musical style and artistic direction. Dorham did likewise, as outlined in the sidebar “Technical Elements of Jazz Trumpet Playing” (see below). His personalized concept of improvisation in the 1950s Blakey-Roach years often consisted of:

- Enhancing selected notes in a melodic statement or improvisational chorus with a subtly felt grace note
- Emphasizing pitches by adding brass color in the form of:
 - Intoning unobtrusive articulations or accentuations, occasionally with an intended rippling effect
 - Bending pitches downward in deliberate tonal distortion before returning each to the original or a new pitch

Technical Elements of Jazz Trumpet Playing

Before further entering Kenny Dorham’s world of improvisation and appreciating his creative processes, a brief review of a trumpet artist’s basic brass language is appropriate. Expressing individuality jazz-wise, in addition to becoming fluent technically, consists of altering the notes being played in one of several ways:

- Pitch/tone
- Vibrato (even alteration of pitch):
 - Slow
 - Fast
 - Slow to fast
 - Fast to slow
- Length/duration
- Intensity (degree of strength, energy, feeling)
- Quality (smoothness, roughness, buzzes, ringing)
- Attack (note beginning)
- Release (note ending)
- Note coloration, which can be achieved by utilizing a:
 - Grace note (short, auxiliary note played tightly against a full-valued note)
 - Swell (gradual increase in volume, followed possibly by a comparable decrease)

- Shake (rapid alternation of two tones that are one step apart)
- Splat (imprecise, scattered attack meant as tonal distortion)
- Blunt (elongated, flat attack, also meant as tonal distortion)
- Pitch bends that – as deliberate raising or lowering of pitch at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of a note – result in their duration taking the following forms:
 - Falloff (dropping from a sustained tone)
 - Doit (rising or climbing from a sustained tone)
 - Smear (dirty-sounding pitch bend falling a half or whole step and rising again)
 - Scoop (sharp tonal falloff rising again to a note lower than the original tone)
 - Rip (dramatic rise in pitch just prior to an emphasized tone)

While words hardly do these tonal effects justice, the listener can certainly hear them on a regular basis in any jazz context.

- Varying phrase placement with an ever-so-slight anticipated or delayed entrance or attack
- Underscoring sustained phrase endings with a developing wider vibrato

This is not to say that the remaining aspects of the jazz brass language were never a part of Dorham's creative persona; they were just not his primary means of expressive phraseology.

In this period, one of the two most important in Dorham's career (the other being his later collaboration with Joe Henderson on Blue Note), his technical command and improvisational poise became remarkably more consistent. The result? He could now be considered among the elite of the jazz trumpet fraternity. Even though infrequent strained execution (usually while reaching for upper-register notes) blurred his technical execution, and a slight wavering of sustained tones was still present, he never wanted to be considered a play-it-safe artist. By extending himself in conceptual ways, he sometimes stretched beyond the limits of his technical resources, and inexactitudes were a natural result.

Dorham did not become a part of the exploratory class of trumpet artist such as Booker Little or Woody Shaw, but he nevertheless wasn't content to make any harmonically interpretive ride less than intriguing. The differences between Dorham and Little from a brass standpoint are technical as well as a matter of creative attitude, with Little eventually demonstrating that he wasn't totally rooted in bebop.

Relating all that has been said style-wise about K.D. and his recordings in this period, and the next for that matter, is a labor of love, for there is much to celebrate in his recordings of the 1950s and 60s. Let's begin with a recording under his own name and continue with those classics led by close associates on which he is prominently featured.

The earlier *Kenny Dorham Quintet* on Debut, recorded in December 1953, is enjoyable but should not be considered a listening priority to gain a knowledgeable grasp of Dorham's artistry. The best place to start is the release that follows.

The Recordings

Kenny Dorham Octet-Sextet: *Afro-Cuban*. Blue Note, January, March 1955. *Hank Mobley, tenor sax; Cecil Payne, bari sax; Horace Silver, piano; and Art Blakey, drums, appear on all 9 tracks. J.J. Johnson, trombone, and Carlos "Potato" Valdes, conga, appear on the beginning 5*

octet tracks. Oscar Pettiford and Percy Heath split the bass accompaniment: Pettiford appears on tracks 1-5, and Heath, on 6-9.

A brief summary of most of the superior tracks follows:

"Afrodisia"

This is a hot, melodic Dorham original in which the trumpeter conceives a refreshing theme and variations middle-register solo. Mobley delivers a strong tenor sax statement, and Valdes and Blakey engage in a brief Afro percussive duet.

"Minor's Holiday"

An unforgettable Dorham theme highlights this tune. The trumpeter renders a very self-assured, wonderfully cooking solo. Mobley, in contrast, emphasizes a more fundamental, but effective, improvisatory language.

"Basheer's Dream"

Dorham is featured in a cautious and deliberate first chorus, which transitions into more freewheeling, assertive passages thereafter. Mobley performs enthusiastic, well-structured ideas. Blakey's short drum breaks are a joy.

"K.D.'s Motion"

This Dorham hard bop composition is instantly identifiable as a classic. The trumpeter stop-times into the rhythmic motion of his solo with effective tonguing and a brash tonality. Payne doesn't deviate from what can be termed fundamentally straight-ahead bari sax execution. Mobley's groove-laden approach is extremely rhythmical.

"La Villa"

Sporting an up tempo with contrasting Latin in the first 4 bars of the bridge, this tune could be considered one of Dorham's most engaging themes. He becomes improvisationally coy and adroit in his impressive interpretation. He's also fiery throughout. Mobley's entrance is magnetic and he immediately shows an affinity for the harmonic structure. Payne solos with more bite to his rhythmic articulation than usual.

"K.D.'s Cab Ride"

The listener's first impression is that this tune offers a strong basis for improv. Contrasting Latin is present in the first 4 bars of the bridge (B section), a structural pattern that may be identified as a Dorham preference. He refers to the theme throughout his most pleasing solo. Mobley doesn't follow Dorham's example, but nevertheless times his phrases masterfully. Payne's confidence is in evidence throughout a fluent solo.

Horace Silver Quintet: *Horace Silver and the Jazz Messengers*. Blue Note, December 1954, February 1955. *Horace Silver, piano; Hank Mobley, tenor sax; Doug Watkins, bass; Art Blakey, drums.*

“Room 608”

After opening with an 8-bar intro, we’re into one of the all-time classic Horace Silver hard bop compositions with a simply unforgettable theme. A technically ecstatic Dorham comes out roaring and immediately establishes a natural feel for the changes. Silver’s solo is as funky as jazz piano gets and is, as expected, rhythmically hot. Mobley feels the direction of the harmonic sequences with great sensitivity. All of Blakey’s well-known roll patterns can be heard in his concluding improv.

“Creepin’ In”

This tune unfolds as a slow, tippy-toe, funky original by Silver. Mobley gives it almost a ballad-like interpretation, being less rhythmically insistent than usual with an obvious concentration on melodicism. Dorham contrastingly combines the funky elements of the theme with melodic phrasing. Silver is deliberately funky, not at all concerned with smooth phrase contours. His shorter staccato passages bring out a trademark brand of rhythmic funk.

“Stop Time”

An 8-bar intro sets up another very memorable, funky hard bop Silver original. Dorham’s impressive technical execution is the highlight of a solo filled with rhythmic excitement and melodic emphasis.

Mobley, not to be outdone, immediately becomes very insistent, both rhythmically and melodically. He can be creatively assertive when a satisfying set of performance circumstances presents itself.

Silver indulges in repetitive rhythmic phrasing that

successfully lifts the swing element of this already grooving structure up a notch.

Blakey’s 4-bar exchanges are, in effect, a warm-up for the super solo that follows, one fueled by added emotional bite and technical flair.

“To Whom It May Concern”

A beautifully conceived, 16-bar Latin feel dominates this lengthy Silver theme as the bridge (B section). The contrast with the 12-bar A sections is striking. That bridge could be a compositional theme all by itself.

An unanticipated melodicism noticeably influences the hard bop pianist’s strutting, rhythmic solo. Mobley places an even greater emphasis on melodic elements in the A sections of his improvisation than does Silver; he also demonstrates an affinity for the bridge changes.

Dorham’s entrance is brassy and he executes well in a hot mode that is certain to produce listener satisfaction.

“Hippy”

There’s cause for concern at the outset here, because the bridge seems melodically disconnected from the rest of the structure. On top of that, a surprising 16-bar interlude is played twice following the melodic statement.

The listener becomes more settled, however, when Dorham’s entrance promptly signals an effective solo in the offing. Then comes a variety of creative ideas, all nicely rendered with an established technical ease.

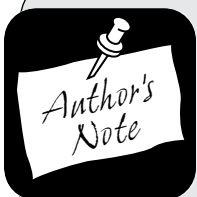
Mobley’s first 8 bars are a demonstration of mid-1950s instrumental command and creative confidence. As frequently happens, Silver, with his patented blues-inflected, funky phraseology, is more intent on the rhythmic motion of the solo than on creating memorable melodic content. Another structural interlude, this time 8 bars in length, is heard twice preceding Blakey’s thunderous drumnastics.

“Hankerin’”

In retrospect, this tune can be proclaimed one of Mobley’s finest originals. He negotiates his own harmonic changes effortlessly as if to set an improvisatory standard for his fellow artists.

Dorham responds by matching him practically bar for bar. Mobley and Dorham are certainly a technically compatible front line, and emotionally compatible to boot.

As a fascinating departure, Silver concentrates much more than usual on melodic content in the first 16 bars of his solo. Prior to the ending melodic statement, a 32-bar thematic variation in the A-A-B-A form (8-8-8-8)



Other Silver Tunes

Also included on the *Horace Silver and the Jazz Messengers* CD are “The Preacher” and “Doodlin’,” two of the pianist’s most familiar and commercially oriented originals. Although they weren’t selected for review, such memorable compositions are performed well, too, and take nothing away from more artistically creative blowing vehicles.

is inserted for developmental contrast and added form. What an unexpectedly gratifying listening bonus.

The Jazz Messengers: *At the Café Bohemia, Vol. 1.* Blue Note, November 1955. *Hank Mobley, tenor sax; Horace Silver, piano; Doug Watkins, bass; Art Blakey, drums.*

This first of two volumes in the Café Bohemia series – though both were recorded with the same personnel in the same month – is clearly superior in terms of chosen repertoire and the solos taken.

“Soft Winds”

Benny Goodman wrote and popularized this timeless, unforgettable 12-bar blues set in a slow walking tempo. Bassist Watkins’ single-bar lead-in ensures a “real down” mood and one of the best “Soft Winds” ever recorded!

Mobley’s unusually long solo is highly melodic and thoughtfully deliberate, as if he desires posterity status for his statement. After the third chorus, he alternates between double timing and the original time feel as an appropriate means of implementing tension and release.

Dorham creates three dirty, funky choruses and then double-times, adding a nasty edge to his tone upon returning to the original time feel. There are few artists better at laying down funk as a mood-setter in the very first few bars of a solo. His phrasing in the second chorus makes this solo a double-time improv classic. With the reappearance of the melodic statement, the listener will likely want to hear “Soft Winds” again, and again, and again....

“The Theme”

Well known to many listeners as an up-tempo original in 32-bar A-A-B-A form (8-8-8-8), this tune’s composer credit often goes to Dorham, but that can be disputed by any number of critics.

Blakey’s extended intro prefaces a Dorham solo that, for the first chorus, reveals temporary uncertainties. He fortunately recovers beautifully in the second chorus and noticeably elevates his conception, technical execution and assertiveness – all simultaneously.

Mobley immediately projects a total command of creative faculties with phrasing that flows through impressively logical constructions. Silver’s forte here, as might be expected, is highly personal funk enhanced by rhythmically dancing phrasing that just seems to self-perpetuate. Watkins engages in a half chorus of walking bass before Blakey takes over for one of his less satisfying drum kit displays.

“Minor’s Holiday”

A Dorham 32-bar up-tempo original that will again be remembered as one of his five finest compositions, “Minor’s Holiday” is in A-A-B-A form (8-8-8-8). The A sections melodically rise and fall in steep phrase contours. Blakey introduces the theme with a full-chorus solo. An 8-bar ensemble tag that acts effectively as a structural springboard launches Dorham authoritatively. He impresses with Gillespie-derived phrasing and, in full flight, is urged on by other quintet members.

Mobley enters cautiously but, by the last 8 bars of the first chorus, is mixing and matching phrase combinations from his stylistic mental database. A surprising 8-bar ensemble interlude is interspersed between Mobley’s and Silver’s improvs. But here, the highly inventive, consistently satisfying hard bop pianist has the rhythmic flow of his usually deliberate phrasing inhibited by the original’s tempo.

That unexpected interlude then introduces Dorham’s exchange of fours with drummer Blakey. These exchanges develop into a scintillating trumpet-drums duet. The Blakey solo that follows is characterized by razor-sharp phrase construction enhanced by high hat timekeeping for the first several bars. Most listeners become addicted quickly to this type of Jazz Messengers display.

“Prince Albert”

This is a wonderful interpretation of Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein’s superior standard “All the Things You Are.” Upon hearing the mood set by Silver’s 8-bar intro, the listener is assured of a jazz original treat. In a classic 32-bar A-A-B-A form (8-8-8-8), “Prince Albert” has a Latin bridge (B section) and 4-bar tag (which could actually boost the bar total to 36). These familiar structural characteristics further define the theme’s revered identity.

Dorham obviously loves the way the changes lay. He performs 2 wonderfully inventive melodic choruses, then double-times for tension and release contrast. This solo has to rank as one of the trumpeter’s best on record.

Mobley, hearing this, then improvises with an almost magical simplicity in his second and third choruses. Thinking he has a good thing going, the tenor saxist unfortunately overextends and loses the melodic focus he had so painstakingly developed.

As a concluding format, the horns trade fours with Blakey.

Why there is no Silver piano solo on this great track is

quite mystifying. Did he request that a solo that wasn't up to his personal standards be edited out? Or did he decide not to solo? For whatever reason, Silver is sorely missed here.

"Lady Bird"

With a 16-bar A-B form, this is considered one of composer-pianist Tadd Dameron's finest compositions. Because its melodic statement is played twice, the theme functions as a 32-bar A-B-A-B form (8-8-8-8). Dorham identifies immediately with the tune's melodicism. His third chorus is really groove-oriented, but that diligent rhythmic feel is lost by the fifth chorus.

Mobley utilizes short phrases to jump-start his improv and establishes continuity by the third chorus. Phrasing consistency is demonstrated in the fourth and fifth choruses. By the middle of the sixth, he is ready to turn over the solo spotlight to Silver, who wastes no time in building melodic blocks of memorable phrasing, a motivation that seems on the wane by his fourth chorus.

The horns individually trade fours with Blakey before the ensemble trades eights with him (nice touch) to close out a performance not a part of the original release.

The Jazz Messengers: At the Café Bohemia, Vol. 2. Blue Note, November 1955. *Hank Mobley, tenor sax; Horace Silver, piano; Doug Watkins, bass; Art Blakey, drums.*

"Sportin' Crowd"

An 8-bar Silver piano intro opens Mobley's repetitive 12-bar up-tempo blues (played twice). As the first soloist, Dorham is full of assertive, well-connected improvisational ideas. A decidedly pinched tonality prevails, however, which raises the question of whether he actually intended this as an instrumental coloration.

Mobley shows disciplined technical skills and plays very much within himself. Silver, focusing on repetitive rhythmic phrasing, immediately establishes irresistible grooves. Blakey then embarks on a relentless, roll-oriented, 2-chorus solo and clashes with Dorham over the timing of the entrance to the ending melodic statement. The trumpeter forces a less-than-certain first bar.

"Like Someone in Love"

Silver's now widely adopted 8-bar intro comfortably prepares the listener for the well-known 32-bar melodic statement. Within the A-B-A-B form (8-8-8-8), Dorham establishes a double-time feel in which he coaxes very satisfying melodic variations out of the ongoing harmonic interpretation.

Mobley's solo literally sings with melodic intent. Silver's double-time emphasis soon leads to funky repetitive figures over a bass backbeat vamp and a tension release into straight time. As before, Dorham takes the melodic lead in the ending melodic statement.

"Just One of Those Things"

Dorham really eats up the chord changes throughout the whole first chorus of this famous Cole Porter 64-bar standard in A-A-B-A form (16-16-16-16). Uncharacteristically, he plays some awkward phrasing during the first 8 bars of the next chorus but recovers quickly. He then turns his third chorus into a personal challenge, as if he is assertively making up for ineffective creative space.

The tenor saxist renders a more deliberate first chorus than Dorham's. His rhythmic daring in the second chorus becomes most pronounced by the beginning of the fourth, and his fifth just cruises.

Silver concentrates on distilling the melodic essence from this up-tempo improv as if he's documenting one of his favorite tunes. In the second chorus, he unexpectedly makes a quick transition to rhythm-dominated phrasing. With its faster tempo, this kind of tune was a Doug Watkins specialty, and the absence of a walking chorus bass solo is a huge missed opportunity.

"Gone With the Wind"

An anticipated Silver 8-bar intro sets the medium tempo for this easily hummable 32-bar standard in A-B-A-C form (8-8-8-8). Dorham's leadoff chorus playfully contains a "Woody Woodpecker Song" quote in bars 9-12 before settling easily into middle-register soloing, particularly in the next 2 choruses.

Mobley lays back and lets his phrasing flow effortlessly, but then bears down rhythmically in the beginnings of the second and third choruses. His double timing in the third chorus is exceptional. It's readily obvious that Silver has decided to stress rhythmic phrase patterns as a solo identity. At the end of his second chorus he concedes a reintroduction of the melody to Dorham.

Max Roach Quintet: Max Roach Plus Four. EmArcy, September 1956, March 1957. *Max Roach, drums; Sonny Rollins, tenor sax; Ray Bryant, piano; George Morrow, bass; Billy Wallace, piano (tracks 7 and 9 only).*

The quality of the jazz on this recording is such that it should rank at the top of Roach's discography right alongside his works with Clifford Brown.

“Ezz-thetic”

Composer George Russell’s 64-bar original in A-A-B-A form (16 bars each section) receives its usual startling thematic reading. Determined not to let this exploratory composition overwhelm him, Sonny Rollins enters the solo arena cautiously by sustaining tones and alternating them with straight-ahead swing eighth notes. In effect, he is warming up to an improv challenge for the first 16 bars. His prodigious technique and adroit creativity come together very rapidly after that, and he unleashes a torrent of notes in ear-popping double time on the bridge of the second chorus.

Hearing this, Dorham paralyzes the listener with his own phrasing supremacy on the bridge of his first chorus and remains highly creative thereafter.

Pianist Bryant digs in right from bar 1 of his initial chorus. His ideas flow masterfully throughout both of his choruses, even at this relentlessly fast tempo.

The 4-bar phrases Roach structures in response to the horns are surprisingly simple over the course of a complete chorus. He then plays two exchanges of 8 bars each as answers to the horn interplay sendoffs that Rollins and Dorham fashion simultaneously. The drummer’s solo following the eights is every bit as artistic as the listener has come to expect.

“Just One of Those Things”

Cole Porter’s 64-bar standard in A-A-B-A form (16-16-16-16) is customarily performed at a blazing up-tempo pace, and the Roach quintet doesn’t disappoint here. The author defies any listener to tap a foot to this unnerving tempo in 4 (and no cheating by marking off beats 1 and 3 only). Rollins plays impressively off stop-time rhythm for the first 56 bars of his opening chorus, shifting to the actual tempo for the last 8 bars. His second chorus is technically and conceptually astounding.

To maintain proper tempo, Dorham consciously anticipates the upcoming harmonic changes. He spreads his phrases well and alternates these with sustained tones to allow for split-second thought.

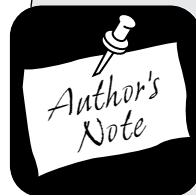
Bryant never falters, as intriguing ideas just keep unfolding. The horns individually trade eights with Roach (fours would come too fast), and an ensuing 2-chorus solo ranks with his recorded best. The concluding melodic statement features an unexpected Roach bridge and, in the last 4 bars, a humorous half-time Dixieland rideout tag that occupies no extra bar space.

“Body and Soul”

Structured in a 32-bar A-A-B-A form (8-8-8-8), this is ballad performance par excellence. A gorgeous Bryant intro leads to an equal sharing of the melodic statement by Rollins and Dorham. The tenor saxist performs the first 8 bars relatively straight and improvises a classic second A section (also 8 bars). Dorham treats the bridge tenderly and becomes more assertively brassy on the final 8 bars (last A section, bars 25-32).

Bryant solos by being pensively ruminative and is more deliberate and rhythmically insistent in the second 8 bars, utilizing shorter phrases to best advantage. George Morrow, a bassist known primarily for his ability to handle fast tempos, solos on the bridge and last 8 bars of that chorus, showing a definite Ray Brown influence.

Dorham enters solidly and double-times on the bridge (eliminating the first 16 bars), which becomes a walking tempo. Rollins brings us back to the original tempo for 6 of the last 8 bars before embarking on a most wonderful cadenza to conclude a mesmerizing “Body and Soul.”

*Why Not This Dorham & Roach?*

At this point in Dorham’s development, an appropriate recording for detailed review would logically seem

to be **Max Roach 4 Plays Charlie Parker**, recorded on the EmArcy label. Although it features either Hank Mobley or George Coleman on tenor sax, in addition to Dorham, and all the horns solo impressively, the glaring deficiency here is the absence of piano throughout. Because Bird’s repertoire is traditionally heard with acoustic piano prominently outlining the harmonic framework, such an absence severely compromises the success of these selections. When instrumentally altered, vital stylistic persuasions often lose their character – or even recognizable identity, which has happened in this instance.

Just think what a memorable set this would have been with the inclusion of Sonny Clark, Walter Bishop, Jr., Tommy Flanagan, Barry Harris or Hank Jones. As the session now stands, it’s difficult to recommend it to new listeners.

“It Don’t Mean a Thing (If It Ain’t Got That Swing)”

The melodic construction of Duke Ellington’s classic jazz symbolism in a traditional 32-bar A-A-B-A form consists of 8 segments of 4 bars each. The Roach quintet’s reading is at a fast tempo that’s not only difficult to perform, but also a super-challenge to hear.

It’s the Roach 8-bar drum intro that lets everyone know what’s coming up tempo-wise. Rollins answers the challenge and roars self-assuredly through the first 2 choruses, coasting noticeably in the first 8 bars of the third chorus to regain his improvisational composure.

Dorham enters with caution, but doubles his note production after the first 16 bars of his initial chorus. In the third chorus he really ignites conceptually and technically.

Chicago pianist Billy Wallace holds back on technique, opting for occasional longer runs and conserving his needed creative energy. Roach follows with what turns out to be 3 choruses of fantastic drum kit ideas. “Smoking” is the usual term for such outpourings.

Rollins and Dorham next trade fours with him for a complete chorus that, after 96 bars of solo drums, seems quite unnecessary. The ending melodic statement contains knockout horn interplay on the bridge. The

horns finally stage an 8-bar tag, which is the last 4 bars of the written composition played twice. At this point, listener exhaustion prevails.

“Minor Trouble”

This tune serves as a most fitting conclusion to an exceptional CD. Ray Bryant’s very melodic original in 32-bar A-A-B-A form (8-8-8-8) is introduced by an 8-bar Roach intro that is over the top. Rollins indicates that he has a personal affinity for the harmonic structure with his superbly paced 2-chorus improv, complete with authoritative double timing.

Dorham’s technique becomes a totally relaxed medium through which satisfying brass ideas flow effortlessly. The double-time bridge in the first chorus is an absolute stunner. Finally, memorable phrasing completely dominates his second chorus.

Pianist Wallace indulges in highly rhythmical counterpoint between hands at the beginning of his second chorus. A relatively unknown musical entity, he possessed a mature conception and a thoroughly developed left hand reminiscent of the talented Billy Taylor. After an exceptional chorus of fours with the horns, Roach phrases flawlessly in a full-chorus solo. Further fours with the horns are, however, quite unnecessary.

1950s-60s:**MISCELLANEOUS RECORDINGS**

Let’s begin with two recordings that should be of great interest, as they feature Dorham playing equally appealing versions of some of the same selections.

Comparison: Two Recordings Featuring Kenny Dorham

Recording	Kenny Dorham Quintet: <i>Whistle Stop</i>. Blue Note, January 1961. <i>Hank Mobley, tenor sax; Kenny Drew, piano; Paul Chambers, bass; Philly Joe Jones, drums.</i>	Clifford Jordan Quintet: <i>Mosaic</i>. Milestone, February 1961. <i>Clifford Jordan, tenor sax; Cedar Walton, piano; Wilbur Ware, bass; Albert Heath, drums.</i> Note: The quintet being reviewed performs on only the first 8 tracks of the CD. Selections 9-16 are from an interesting but unrelated date by the tenor saxist.
Group Inherent Qualities	Dorham’s quintet is the superior group, especially from the rhythm section perspective. Chambers and Philly Joe had few equals in the 1950s. As a frontline rhythm team, Dorham and Mobley also had the benefit of having worked together, giving them an edge in interactive compatibility.	The Jordan quintet interacts superbly in the recording studio but, although displaying no obvious performance weaknesses, its members have no real track record of working together and so suffer by comparison with Dorham’s quintet. Here, Dorham, as sideman, is clearly subordinate to leader Jordan.

	Kenny Dorham Quintet	Clifford Jordan Quintet
Tenor Sax	Mobley was a secondary tenor saxist in the jazz community but performed simply and directly, resulting in enormous listener appeal. Along with his bebop and blues capabilities, his smoky, non-edgy tone was a definite stylistic plus.	Jordan leaned to the more progressive side of jazz tenor sax evolution, favoring tonal characteristics and improvisatory devices that brought him closer to the John Coltrane approach to performance. If not for that, he would have been more widely accepted.
Piano	Drew commanded respect for his enormous technique and fully utilized it to treat listeners to funky, swinging phraseology that was consistently memorable and appropriate to each performance environment.	Walton's harmonic sense resulted in unhesitating listener approval and fascination. He had the capability to swing hard, achieving unforgettable melodic and rhythmic climaxes.
Bass	Chambers was simply the most swinging, naturally talented bassist to grace the 1950s decade, with a melodic feel and blues approach that were beyond critical reproach. Obligato accompaniments were a specialty.	Ware possessed an unusually adroit, lean style of accompanying and soloing. While extremely admirable, his harmonic vocabulary is an acquired taste. He never failed, however, to enhance his performance surroundings rhythmically.
Drums	Philly Joe's uncanny timing of both coordinated independence accompaniment and solo phrasing marked him as an artist who brought unparalleled excitement to any group he graced.	Heath accompanied and soloed out of a deftly tight sticking style that endeared him to small groups fortunate enough to include him in their tours or recordings. He remains one of the most underrated modern drummers.
Performance Approach	Dorham's quintet exuded a huge, loosely structured swing that was rhythmically infectious and intoxicatingly interwoven.	Jordan presided over quintet interplay that was noticeably tighter in rhythmic character than Dorham's and harmonically more contemporary.

The joint Dorham-Jordan CD reviews begin with the selections that are shared by both recordings.

Whistle Stop: "Windmill"

The interactive 8-bar intro signals instantly that Dorham's medium-tempo "Sweet Georgia Brown" derivative original in its 32-bar A-B-A-C form (8-8-8-8) is going to be a memorable swinger. The first 4 bars of each A section are a delightful backbeat vamp leading to straight time for 12 bars. The bar-length breakdown is as follows:

- **Bars 1-4:** Section A vamp leading to **bars 5-16:** A-B straight time
- **Bars 17-20:** Section A vamp leading to **bars 21-32:** A-C straight time

So that listeners can anticipate when they might tune in to the melody of the actual standard tune, theme recognition appears in the B section (bars 9-16) and the C section (bars 25-32).

Dorham's 3 solo choruses are marked by unexpected

conceptual uncertainty until the C section of the first chorus (bars 25-32). By the B section of the second chorus (bars 9-16), it becomes obvious that he feels a natural rhythmic surge in harmonic interpretation flow and begins to groove mightily. While everything resolves itself satisfyingly, the listener is left with the impression that this is not one of Dorham's first-rate solos.

Mobley, on the other hand, sets a simplified improvisatory pace for 2 choruses while swinging throughout. The result is that he plays within himself beautifully. The mood established by the tenor saxist remains in evidence as Drew finds a light, rhythmic groove and floats his single-note lines effortlessly over a developing tight Chambers-Philly Joe bass and drums quarter note prancing feel. There is an entirely appropriate chord summation in the last 8 bars of his second chorus. Meanwhile, Chambers' arco phrasing swings deftly.

Then, Philly Joe's short, vertically constructed hesitation phrases alternate with longer, accented roll patterns

in a structural contrast that has become a familiar, but still awe-inspiring, listening experience. Over the length of a single chorus, it is certainly effective.

The concluding melodic statement and outro are logically reversed from the sound patterns at the beginning of the selection and provide a fitting sendoff.

Mosaic: "Windmill"

The intro and beginning melodic statement are structured the same as in the Dorham quintet version, but the noticeable elevation of the tempo translates into an exuberant up-tempo romp.

Here, Dorham really steams through 2 choruses of trumpet creativity without any extraneous or superficial technical displays. He is totally focused on exacting a most flawless interpretation of the structure's harmonic possibilities.

Jordan exhibits no difficulty in negotiating the way the changes lay in the established tempo. He sounds confident and up to any performance challenges.

Although conveying the impression that the best is yet to come, pianist Walton inexplicably takes only a single chorus. He can dazzle, both technically and conceptually, but has neither time nor space here to do anything more than find a satisfying comfort zone.

Jordan and Heath follow by engaging in half a chorus of tenor-drum exchanges. Heath executes technically precise, conceptually popping phrases, and another 16 bars of exchanges leading to a full chorus of drums would have been a most gratifying addition.

Choice of tempo distinctly separates the Dorham and Jordan "Windmill" interpretations, but both recordings will be savored by established and new listeners alike.

Whistle Stop: "Sunrise in Mexico"

The 32-bar intro of Dorham's tribute to a Mexican sunrise starts with a 16-bar ensemble chord section of repeating, 4-bar call and response patterns. Chambers continues the harmonic suspense in an 8-bar double-stop vamp, accompanied by Philly Joe's Latin snare drum colorations. Finally, the whole rhythm section participates in another 8-bar vamp featuring pianist Drew's chorded enhancements. The call and response patterns repeat once more in smaller increments.

The melodic statement is rendered by the horns over a rhythm section vamp in a fast walking tempo. The form is a 16-bar A-B-A-B in 4-bar sections (4-4-4-4). Because of the extensive theme identification in the in-

tro, the melodic statement is not repeated, even though brief in length.

Straight time characterizes the solo format that Dorham utilizes to great advantage in 3 choruses (48 bars) of trumpet improv, choosing to create alternate 4-bar patterns of chorus-type phrases and almost verbatim melodic response patterns from the theme. The creative effect is of an artist conversing with himself. This will not seem unusual until Mobley's tenor solo starts to unfold.

Mobley abandons the alternation of Dorham's types of phrases in favor of creating a continuous, flowing eighth note swing feel (usually favored by the trumpeter) for 2 choruses. In hindsight, the improvisational contrast is clearly effective. The tenor saxist is in his stylistic element here and expressively delivers an easily comprehended message.

Drew's single chorus flows in a manner similar to Mobley's and is notable for its swinging content. Chambers is also limited to a single chorus, his pizzicato phrasing fully intoned and attractively shaped.

Now, to the involved, concluding melodic statement. Chambers' 8-bar double-stop vamp reappears as a prelude to the ensemble's 16-bar theme reprise, this time with pronounced Philly Joe Latin accompaniment featuring a driving cymbal pattern. The ensemble repeats the 16-bar theme chordally before Chambers takes us out on a 16-bar double-stop vamp that fades predictably. Amazingly, this arrangement clearly overshadows the soloists.

Mosaic: "Sunrise in Mexico"

It is immediately obvious in the ensemble's beginning 16-bar chord section of the intro that the tempo is more accelerated than on the Dorham version. Another difference is that bassist Ware's 8-bar vamp that follows is not double-stopped.

Joined by Heath's mesmerizing Afro-Cuban rhythmic overlay, the bassist continues his vamp for 4 more bars. Yet another 4-bar vamp ensues, this time by the whole rhythm section featuring Walton in darting, repeated 2-bar phrase colorations.

The melodic statement is similar to Dorham's interpretation, with the horns heard over the rhythm section vamp, but they choose to repeat the theme, and the emotional climate is much hotter.

The whole solo format is in straight time, and because the A-B-A-B form allows each player the option of concluding after any B section, there is the possibility of

solo length assuming other than full-chorus proportions. Jordan avails himself of that option in 3½ tenor sax choruses, where sustained rhythmic phrasing abounds rather than driving eighth note swing-feel improv.

Walton concentrates exclusively on double-time, single-note lines for his first chorus and then divides a second one equally between octaves in the first half and hard-hitting chord constructions in the last half.

All the while, Heath simmers appropriately in the Afro-Cuban mode. He then has a full chorus of Afro-Cuban rhythmic variations to himself, in which, disappointingly, no real solo development occurs.

As the concluding melodic statement begins with an 8-bar bass-drums vamp, there comes the realization that Dorham has not played a trumpet solo. Why? “Sunrise in Mexico” is his original composition and should have been a feature for him. While it’s highly doubtful, were trumpet solos actually recorded that he rejected?

The rhythm section’s 8-bar vamp is heard with Walton’s showstopping single lines dissolving into octaves for the final 2 bars. The ensemble then remarkably plays the theme three times:

- The first time through is 16 bars of normal melodic interpretation.
- Repeating it a second time, sustained chords now highlight its continued interpretation.
- The third thematic reprise sports an effectively staged horn interplay that extends to a 4-bar horn tag.

Both performances of “Sunrise in Mexico” are comparably pleasing because of the format differences and a definite contrast in tempo. But leaving out Dorham as a soloist? Somebody’s gotta be kidding!

Now we come to outstanding selections that are not duplicated on the two CDs.

Whistle Stop: “Buffalo”

Drew and Chambers equally split deliberately spaced, funky 4-bar intro passages, the pianist being horn-like in single lines, and the bassist, responsive in a powerful walk. This 8-bar gem is the perfect lead-in to a really “down” Southwestern 12-bar blues in A-A-B form (4-4-4). The A sections function as call patterns and the B, as an appropriate response. Relatively open horn voicing in intervals of a fourth creates a harmonic atmosphere that the listener will happily approve. Philly Joe’s prominent backbeat makes the thematic repeat even more enjoyable.

The solo format opens with 4 choruses by Mobley, whose sustained-note phrasing eliminates the possibility

of a double-time contrast and, in the process, enhances the Southwestern funk feel. The listener can’t help being drawn to the drummer’s dancing shuffle, as he lays on the backbeat for further enhancement.

Dorham’s repetitive phrasing in the first chorus sets the stage for exploratory note searching in the following 12 bars. Sustained note phrasings with just the right amount of note bending dominate thereafter in the remaining 2 choruses. He is a master of this type of mood creation.

The emotional groove heightens noticeably in Drew’s 4-chorus outing, with Chambers and Philly Joe literally stomping in the pianist’s chorded climax throughout the fourth chorus.

The funk groove is broken by Chambers’ superb double-time phrasing in bars 5-12 of each of his 2 choruses. Had he finished each chorus out as he began (with phrase deliberation established by the other soloists), a consistent mood would have been preserved. In the heat of the moment, sometimes overall outlook is compromised.

In the concluding melodic statement, an ensemble fade occurs during the second thematic run-through, but this electronic manipulation does not lessen listener satisfaction.

Whistle Stop: “Whistle Stop”

This title track begins with the horns’ closed harmony simulating the whistle of a train approaching in the distance, as Philly Joe’s open-and-close high hat approximates the engine’s driving motion. This instrumental effect fills the first 4 bars of a normal 8-bar intro.

The train flies by briskly in the rhythmically vibrant A-A-B-A form (8-8-8-8) of an up-tempo Dorham original based on George Gershwin’s “I’ve Got Rhythm.” The ensemble really energizes this head.

Mobley revels in the strolling atmosphere (sans piano) of familiar harmonic change sequences he has interpreted hundreds of times. For sound pattern contrast, Drew enters with concise comping on the bridges (B sections) of the tenor’s 3 choruses.

Dorham’s note selection puts him in a different improvisatory world from Mobley as he seeks freshly conceived, expressive phrases not usually executed on these changes. At the beginning of his third chorus, he finds a combination rhythmic-melodic groove.

A magical 3-way rhythmic radar between Drew, Chambers and Philly Joe infuses the pianist’s 2 choruses with a creative lifting off the floor, especially during

Drew's light chordal touches in the last 32 bars.

What follows is ensemble exchanges of fours with Jones on the A sections of a chorus, enabling the incomparable drummer to boldly, flat-out unleash his drum kit component dynamics on the B section (bridge).

After a spirited thematic reprise, the outro is significantly embellished to end another brief chapter of "I've Got Rhythm" interpretation in one of its many clever guises.

Mosaic: "Extempore"

This extraordinary original will likely become a listener favorite. Without any intro, irregular stop-time punctuations lend rhythmic excitement to an already grooving horn interpretation of fast-walking 12-bar blues in a seemingly fresh A-B-C form (4-4-4).

In his 4 tenor choruses, Jordan establishes a fascinating creative pattern by preaching insistently on the first 4 bars of each chorus before resorting to double-time runs in the later stages of chorus structures. This recognizable approach is well executed and masterfully maintained throughout.

Dorham stretches for unusual note choices in the second of his 2 choruses and shows the conceptual discipline needed to achieve continual high-level phrase construction. Once again, his whole identity revolves around the musicality of improv that's free of flashy technical displays. When technical complexity is present, it is usually to elaborate on conceptual thoughts already in motion.

True to form, Ware utilizes the sparest note selection of any major bassist performing in the 1950s and beyond. That, along with his desire to interpret harmony via his own unique language, requires a listener adjustment to his individualistic style in just 2 choruses. He is saying as much as most other bass soloists, but without the need for as much facility.

Walton laces groove-laden, single-line phrases with liberal doses of double-time decorative runs throughout his 2 piano choruses. A huge plus is that he never strays from the essence of phrasing logic by interjecting bits of disconnected thoughts.

"Extempore" is the kind of tough, rhythmically tight blues that the listener can return to repeatedly for pleasing emotional communication.

K.D. in Other Settings

Following those exceptional recordings, we have several dates that should also pique listener interest either be-

cause of the personnel involved, the selections reviewed, or both.

Kenny Dorham Quartet-Quintet-Sextet: *Jazz Contrasts*. OJC/Riverside, May 1957. *Sonny Rollins, tenor sax (except tracks 3 and 5); Hank Jones, piano; Oscar Pettiford, bass; Max Roach, drums; Betty Glamman, harp (tracks 3-5 only).*

"I'll Remember April"

Oscar Pettiford's 8-bar intro consists of a strummed-guitar style of bass phrasing, in 2-bar varied segments, that doesn't foretell the strong up-tempo rendering of this established standard's theme in its 48-bar A-B-C-D-A-B form (8-8-8-8-8-8).

Dorham carries the melody for the first 16 bars (A-B sections) with decorative tenor sax accompaniment. The thematic baton is then passed to Rollins, who floats behind the beat over the powerful rhythm section for the middle third (C-D) of the extended melody before releasing back to K.D. for the final repeated A-B 16 bars.

His 5 trumpet choruses are heard in two distinct phases. The first two sport a burry tone and assume the function of technical and conceptual warm-up, whether consciously intended or not. The third chorus is a much more fulfilled, creative affair (bars 97-144) and has the performance effect of alerting the listener to jazz expertise that should be remembered. Dorham continues that high-level execution for the remaining 2 choruses, his brassy fireworks occasionally erupting in 8-bar segments.

The Rollins solo that follows contains seldom-experienced virtuosic contrast in phrasing. Between his darting, irregularly syncopated motifs that are juxtaposed against the grain of the flowing rhythm section and the fiercely executed runs that are slightly out front of his accompaniment, the result is 4 choruses of startling proportions.

On piano, Jones conceives a magnificently spaced, freshly phrased chorus following Rollins, but why only one?

Dorham and Rollins then embark on a string of 8-bar exchanges with Roach. As 3 choruses of horns-drums interplay, this is a perfect opportunity for the drummer to display his technically precise, vertically intricate phrasing. The 3-chorus drum solo that follows skillfully alternates between coordinated independence patterns and roll-oriented constructions. Further certification of Roach's position atop the drum world is unnecessary.

Before the thematic reprise, there are 2 choruses of

8-bar interactive challenges between Dorham and Roach. These are intriguingly structured, as can be expected, because the group was developing them nightly in the Roach quintet.

Kenny Dorham Quartet: *Quiet Kenny*. OJC/Prestige/New Jazz, November 1959. *Tommy Flanagan, piano; Paul Chambers, bass; Art Taylor, drums.*

“Blue Friday” and “Blue Spring Shuffle” are two of the finest trumpet quartet blues to be heard anywhere.

“Blue Friday”

Lacking the anticipated intro, Dorham states the melodically memorable theme of his fast-walking 12-bar blues theme in A-A-B form (4-4-4). Played twice, as are most short forms, his clear tonal projection throughout signals his determination to make this one a classic.

The creative essence extracted from blues changes for 9 choruses (108 bars) without succumbing to double-time expression as a contrasting necessity is most successful. Dorham disciplines himself beautifully to the challenge. There is a single double-time chorus (the third), but it is effortless and inserted naturally in the midst of exquisitely selected note choices. No further double time occurs before or after.

Pianist Flanagan comes as close to creative phrase perfection as is humanly possible in 5 immaculate choruses. Most listeners would delight in at least another half-dozen renderings at that performance level.

Paul Chambers’ pizzicato phrasings are often to be savored as some of the truest, most naturally conceived bass ideas of the late 1950s. These are no different, and his 4 choruses resonate long after the tune ends.

On trumpet, the leader prefaces the concluding melodic statement with just one more outstanding 12-bar improv wrap-up.

“Blue Spring Shuffle”

Chambers gets an opportunity to open with 12 bars of stunning, beautifully structured walking lines at a slightly below medium tempo.

Dorham happily exposes us to two thematic run-throughs of an amazingly simple blues form comprised solely of 5-beat melodic phrases stated six times. It isn’t necessary to hear the theme a second time to be assured that an inspired performance is in the offing.

Even Dorham must have been so taken with the theme’s character that he reprises the melody for yet one more chorus, with appropriate variations, of course. His

remaining 4 solo choruses never leave listeners the least bit mystified as to where the improv is heading. All in all, his tonal clarity, technical execution and choice of blues phrasings leave nothing to be desired.

In the course of the next 36 solo bars, Flanagan displays an enviable capability to greatly enhance his melodic focus with an immediately apparent uplifting rhythmic emphasis. It’s so infectious that Chambers and drummer Taylor can’t resist adding to its effectiveness.

The trumpeter returns for a call and response chorus with Flanagan, to which Taylor naturally responds. Utilizing the same call and response format, Dorham and Chambers then engage in a trumpet-bass unison for 12 bars.

Expecting this tune to end? Not if Chambers has his way. His 60 bars (5 choruses) of head-shaking blues will undoubtedly force a smile of recognition and appreciation of his artistry over the whole 1:51 of his solo.

Another call and response chorus by the ensemble takes the place of one of the concluding melodic statement choruses, so a single summation suffices.

Kenny Dorham Sextet-Tommy Flanagan Trio: *Osmosis*. Black Lion, October 1961. *Frank Haynes, tenor sax; Curtis Fuller, trombone; Tommy Flanagan, piano; Ben Tucker, bass; Dave Bailey, drums.*

“Osmosis”

The ensemble’s melodic statement of this hip, medium-tempo 12-bar blues in A-B-C form (6-2-4) is broken down into the following bar sections:

- A 6-bar rhythm section vamp with an understated backbeat underscores the horns’ initial entrance with the feel of an intro.
- The next 2 bars in a straight-time 4 are an obvious release from that rhythmic vamp.
- The last 4 bars of the theme comprise a blues melodic summation.

Stated twice, it signals the order of the exciting solos to follow.

Dorham enters unhesitatingly with an 8-chorus solo that would have been branded as “groovesville” in slang of the day. At this just-right tempo, he really cooks in middle-register execution. The noticeably slight bending of notes enhances his improv magnificently. As Art Blakey used to say, “The pots are on.”

Next up, tenor saxist Haynes is intent on setting a consistent rhythmic swing momentum throughout 9

choruses. These changes seem to lie in sequences that he prefers. Fuller's first 2 trombone choruses hop, skip and jump around the harmonic framework before he reverts to 5 of them in a straight-ahead mold.

Enough cannot be said of pianist Flanagan's 6 choruses of sparkling, on-top-of-the-beat phrasings. They're beautifully conceived and intoned. His whole concept is an improvisational attitude. Finally, Tucker treats us to Leroy Vinnegar-esque walking, and those 24 bars take us back to that tantalizing theme once again.

Benny Golson Sextet: *The Modern Touch*. OJC/Riverside, December 1957. *Benny Golson, tenor sax; J.J. Johnson, trombone; Wynton Kelly, piano; Paul Chambers, bass; Max Roach, drums.*

"Blues on Down"

As a really "down," walking 12-bar blues in A-A-B form (4-4-4) by tenor saxist-composer Golson, this is jazz ecstasy! The theme is stated twice, but another two times or so would have been most welcome.

Dorham immediately gets into the blues "cracks" of these harmonic changes. The expected contrasting double-time execution doesn't at all upset the funky, low-down feel that has been established. His 4 choruses could have been extended without being excessive.

Then Golson enters in a John Coltrane conceptual approach, but with a tonal projection of a previous era. Somewhere in the middle of his 4 choruses, it dawns on the listener that his thought processes betray the mood of his composition. In an equal number of choruses, trombonist Johnson renders regal, intellectually felt blues.

Pianist Kelly brings us back into the expected funky atmosphere with 48 bars of tastefully conceived phrasing. His rhythmic feel is incredible. Chorded insertions leave the listener desiring more, as his whole blues persona is to be revered.

Chambers' double-time bass passages are well executed, but the mood suffers a slight disconnect, even in those short 24 bars. Roach's sustained rolls and both eighth note and quarter note triplets highlight 2 choruses of drums that identify what this performance in excess of 11 minutes has been all about.

The concluding melodic statement reprises the "down" part of "Blues on Down."

Ernie Henry Quintet: *Presenting Ernie Henry*. OJC/Riverside, August 1956. *Ernie Henry, alto sax; Kenny Drew, piano; Wilbur Ware, bass; Art Taylor, drums.*

"Checkmate"

In a fast-walking 32-bar A-A-B-A form (8-8-8-8), this Ernie Henry original serves as an entirely appropriate "What Is This Thing Called Love?" derivative. Pianist Drew provides the intro, with bassist Ware accompanying in backbeat phrasing for rhythmic emphasis.

The melodic statement features Charlie Parker-inspired A sections (bars 1-8, 9-16 and 25-32), leaving the B section (bars 17-24) open for Henry's bittersweet alto improv. An intriguing aspect of his 2 solo choruses is that, although he adapts Parker's bebop language to his personal creativity, it is with a much more simplified rhythmic structure. Emotional intensity, however, is certainly built in throughout the whole 64 bars.

Because Dorham is so familiar with the changes of "What Is This Thing Called Love?", he takes a living-on-the-edge interpretive stance in 2 choruses by seeking out those notes that aren't usually heard from a trumpet soloist on this well-known harmonic structure. There are a few tentative phrases, but that's what happens when an artist decides to be exploratory.

Drew is up next and renders 2 choruses that are surprising, as is his even but consistently dancing phraseology, with none of the anticipated tension and release patterns. Despite that, his performance is entirely enjoyable.

As a concluding solo format gesture, Henry and Dorham trade 4-bar phrases with drummer Taylor. Watch out for the drums' 4 bars on the B section, as they're both a technical and conceptual killer!

"Cleo's Chant"

Ernie Henry's original, in a 28-bar A-A-B-A form (8-8-4-8), is in a deliberately walking tempo that brings out the artistically satisfying theme. There's no intro to usher in the melodic statement. In his opening 2 alto sax choruses, Henry's smoldering intensity is a key to understanding and appreciating his approach to improv. Throughout, he is free of technical flamboyance and conceptual superficiality.

Dorham structures a more dramatic contrast than usual over the course of his 56 bars. He sustains many phrases, choosing to enhance them with double-time flourishes that seemingly play catch-up in his creative scheme. This may be a result of his realization that Henry's theme can most effectively be stressed by sustained passages with less rhythmic movement.

After listening hard to Dorham's insistence on thematic clarity, Drew creates mood-sustaining phrasing over 2

choruses. Contained in his improvisational discipline is a declaration that there will be no drifting off the established extemporaneous course.

Ware begins a chorus full of rhythmic contrast, melodic quotes and harmonic intrigue before disappointingly bringing it all to an end after only 20 bars (the A-A-B sections, 8-8-4). He should have been allotted 2 full choruses (56 bars) like the other soloists. As it is, the concluding melodic statement is limited to just the last A section (8 bars) and a 4-bar reflective tag.

Jackie McLean Quintet: Jackie McLean. Japanese Blue Note (Toshiba), June 1962. *Jackie McLean*, alto sax; *Sonny Clark*, piano; *Butch Warren*, bass; *Billy Higgins*, drums.

“The Three Minors”

Now, here’s a scintillating quintet and a selection to match its capabilities. The title of Jackie McLean’s assertive, up-tempo original refers to:

- The three designated minor scales played for 4 bars each
- A predetermined three sections of 4 bars each that make up the 12-bar A-B-C form
- The three diverse thematic moods (4 bars each):
 1. Shout with motion-filled rhythmic accompaniment by the piano-bass-drums unison (contemporary stop time)
 2. Latin rhythmic accompaniment under sustained horn
 3. Straight-ahead swing as the horns energetically release from Latin tension

At the conclusion of these diverse thematic moods in the melodic statement, McLean’s sharp-edged, incisive alto sax phrasing dominates the 11 opening solo choruses. Inherent in his tonal projection is an instrumental cry, to which some listeners may need a moment to adjust.

Dorham is really up for this harmonic challenge and meets those three minor-scale 4-bar sections head-on. There’s certainly no apprehension on his part regarding McLean’s composition. In fact, it is so appealing that he even takes 12 choruses – one more than the composer took. No doubt his assertiveness in the minor mode is a result of his experiences with that particular aspect of the Jazz Messengers repertoire of Silver and Blakey.

It is known that pianist Clark also relishes the minor mode setting, and his chorded summation in the fifth solo chorus signals a conclusion that very well could have been extended for at least another 36 to 48 bars.

Although the phrasing of drummer Higgins’ 24 bars is impressively conceived, it unfortunately is not logically connected.

“Blues in a Jiff”

Clark’s relaxed, walking 12-bar original in A-B-C-D form (4-2-2-4) doesn’t at all sound like it was written in a jiff. Of immediate interest is an 8-bar ensemble interlude between the melodic statement and the soloists, which is further inserted between the solos.

McLean’s 3 choruses are nicely structured with interspersed melodic reference points highlighting a constant interweaving of more obvious and less familiar phrasing. Although it’s not usually like him to simplify phrasing to such a degree, the listener certainly benefits from his decision to do so. Now comes the question, why only 3 choruses? He had everything going for him, and that was apparent right from the end of the first chorus.

Dorham chooses to make a burbling tonality his thematic blues focus. He does so in a tension and release pattern with sustained clear passages acting as the release from that heightening of tonal projection. This has been a feature of a few of his other solos – just not in quite the same manner and with such effectiveness. Might we have been favored with more than a mere 4 choruses?

Poised conceptual melodicism permeates Clark’s 5 choruses, in which a very fundamental, but creatively refreshing, phrase deliberation abounds. He has been certified as “legendary,” which becomes more understandable the longer one listens to the essence of his purist jazz identity.

The 4-bar tag following the concluding melodic statement ends on a chord of thematic resolution leading to obvious listener satisfaction.

Kenny Dorham Quintet: *And the Jazz Prophets*. Chessmates, April 1956. *J.R. Monterose*, tenor sax; *Dick Katz*, piano; *Sam Jones*, bass; *Arthur Edgehill*, drums.

“DX”

This spirited up-tempo Dorham original in 32-bar A-A-B-A form (8-8-8-8) simulates “I’ve Got Rhythm” in the A sections, with a chromatically descending B section evident as a structural contrast.

Drummer Edgehill sets the time in 2 bars of open-and-close high hats, after which the hard-hitting, crackling ensemble divides a 12-bar intro into two tension phrases of 4 bars each and a single 4-bar release. The melodic statement is unison horns full of assertive phrasing

that influences the up-tempo rhythmic motion of the composition. Sustained notation on beats 2 and 4 of 6 bars launches a 2-bar trumpet break.

Dorham is poised for this tempo and shows a preference for deliberate articulation and note choices. He reaches for high-note phrases with confidence in his second and third choruses and projects an overall air of technical control and improvisational savvy. This is close to ideal trumpet jazz.

Little-known East Coast tenor artist J.R. Monterose climbs all over these harmonic changes for 64 bars with both technical and conceptual assurance. Always turning in forceful performances, he should be recognized by a much wider segment of jazz listeners. His Blue Note CD, titled simply *J.R. Monterose*, is an arresting showcase of his immense talent.

Pianist Katz, mainly a 1950s recording artist, reinforces simplified phrasing in his 2 choruses as a contrast to his strong right-hand single lines and chord placements. The irregularity of such patterns results in passages that are as unanticipated as they are effective.

Showing up immediately in the fours that Edgehill exchanges with Dorham are obvious influences by Kenny Clarke and Philly Joe Jones. That chorus leads to a variety of 8-bar sections in the concluding melodic statement:

- Bassist Sam Jones and Edgehill exchange fours in the first two A sections (bars 1-16).
- The ensemble is heard throughout the B section (bars 17-24).
- A reemergence of the theme occurs in the last A section (bars 25-32).

The outro is the intro duplicated with the finality of a strong chordal ending.

Kenny Dorham Quintet: *Matador/Inta Somethin'*. Blue Note, November 1961. *Jackie McLean*, alto sax; *Walter Bishop, Jr.*, piano; *Leroy Vinnegar*, bass; *Art Taylor*, drums. The *Matador* date is not reviewed here, and the relevant players are not listed.

"Una Mas"

One of Dorham's most famous compositions, this medium-tempo original is in a 16-bar A-B form (8-8), with its melodic statement played twice. The intro is begun by pianist Bishop as an 8-bar dance-beat vamp accompanied by the laid-back, but rhythmically punchy, bass and drums of Vinnegar and Taylor, respectively. This leads to another 8-bar section by the ensemble in a de-

scending passage with a catchy melodic hook.

The beginning melodic statement is a 32-bar interpretation abetted by the rhythm section's dance-beat accompaniment. As an A-B-A-B form (8-8-8-8), it can be heard as:

- The A sections featuring the dance beat accompaniment (the rhythmic framework being a loose bossa nova)
- The B sections acting as a straight-time, kicking ensemble contrast

Because it's Dorham's composition, he obviously follows its original intent and structures his 4 choruses in the dance-beat A sections and straight-ahead Bs. Two stylistic features are a theme and variations conception dominating each chorus structure, with blues tonalities artfully coloring the phraseology.

Alto saxist McLean's "sour" tonality and outside note choices translate into a 6-chorus solo of overwhelming creative edge. The listener readily senses that McLean is really into his stylistic bag.

Throughout Bishop's 4 choruses, a syncopated back-beat left-hand accompaniment to single-note lines will either groove like crazy or bore the listener to death, depending on his or her piano solo perspective. Historically, this pattern has proven to be a rhythmic stimulus, à la Red Garland of the classic Miles Davis quintet, but proponents of technically accomplished pianists don't always see it that way.

The concluding melodic statement leaves the listener feeling that this is what most jazz is all about – rhythmically, tonally and emotionally.

"San Francisco Beat"

With no intro prefacing the thematic proceedings, the approximately 1-bar staccato ensemble phrases give drummer Taylor an opportunity for a kicking workout in Dorham's medium-tempo 12-bar shout blues.

Bishop engages in stop-time piano accompaniment to Dorham for the first 8 bars of his initial trumpet go-around, as a painfully out-of-tune piano abruptly spoils the scene. How musicians get through a whole engagement with all those wayward notes is anyone's guess. Dorham really starts to groove creatively in the straight time that commences in bar 9 of that chorus, and the piano distraction lessens. The following 6 choruses are colored by a blues tonality that is infectious.

McLean begins by strolling over bass and drums

(sans piano), and by his third chorus is reaching for notes furthest outside the harmonic framework that will creatively fit his state of mind. Bishop returns to comp groovily in the fourth chorus; from that point on, McLean leans hard on those outside notes. Dorham enhances the proceedings with swing-style trumpet riffs in choruses 9-11. At the conclusion of McLean's 14 total choruses, everyone knows he was really into this tune.

Dancing, offbeat, left-hand syncopations again spur Bishop's groove-laden, single-note lines in a 36-bar solo that is a perfect send-off to this selection. But that bar-room piano sound. Ouch!

EARLY 1960s: A JOE HENDERSON COLLABORATION ON BLUE NOTE

At this stage of his development as a jazz artist and instrumental stylist, Dorham could be characterized as:

- Having totally identified with the creative nuances of bebop (1945-55)
- Being so thoroughly immersed in the language of Charlie Parker that he was more than temporarily oblivious to its long-term limitations (such as lack of a continuing appeal to a large audience segment)
- Emerging in the mid-1950s as a leading exponent of hard bop, a fundamental rhythmic and melodic derivative of bebop
- Not yet having decided whether to make a strong commitment to any other newer jazz style or musical persuasion

Getting to the point, Dorham's career at the outset of the 1960s was stalled at a crossroads. What kind of artistic resolution was possible?

In 1962, enter Joe Henderson, a 25-year-old young lion of a tenor saxist who had just been discharged from a touring U.S. Army Special Services unit. Readily he demonstrated an ear-opening contemporary conception and obvious technical prowess. In slang of the day, he was "the real deal." It was soon apparent to the most casual listeners of new jazz talent that Henderson would be heard from in the international arena. His fortuitous extended gig at the Counterpoint in Detroit fronting a compatible rhythm section (pianist Hugh Lawson, bassist Ernie Farrow, drummer Teagle Fleming) became one of the first public signals of that eventuality.

Through the invaluable phenomenon of sitting-in that was still possible in New York and elsewhere in

the early 1960s, Dorham and Henderson performed together and soon hit it off, both musically and personally. Dorham served as Henderson's unofficial mentor; Henderson, in turn, provided the more contemporary creative sparks that helped to partially revitalize the trumpeter's career. They became, to a lesser extent of course, a Dizzy Gillespie-James Moody or Clifford Brown-Sonny Rollins type of frontline tandem. Both contributed original compositions to a joint repertoire and played everything else as if they had also written it themselves. Dorham and Henderson should be appreciated musically and analyzed technically as one of the finest small group leader collaborations ever, not to mention their individual creative contributions.

This K.D. development period is so named because all five of the recordings he made with Henderson are on the Blue Note label, two under the trumpeter's leadership and three under Henderson's. It's almost a shame that the three sessions Henderson led are the strongest musically. Dorham, the much older, more established player, later became the ignored artist in further need of a career boost; unfortunately, none of the recordings he made toward the middle of the 1960s were exceptional enough to come close to gaining him much recognition in the marketplace.

Dorham's *Una Mas*, recorded in April 1963 with Henderson, pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Butch Warren and drummer Tony Williams, clocks in at less than 40 minutes total; of that inadequate time, the title track, a very repetitive Dorham original that rhythmically recycles like an endless loop, takes up an overly generous 15 minutes. "Straight Ahead," a much more attractive selection, is 8:55 in length, and another 5 minutes or more of that would have been preferable to the time allotted "Una Mas." Or, maybe with a greatly shortened title track, the remaining selections could have been possibly enhanced by choice unused selections.

Despite its seemingly ideal all-star personnel (Henderson, pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Albert Heath), the other Dorham-led Blue Note CD, *Trompeta Toccata*, recorded in September 1964, is also more than mildly disappointing. Characterized by the trumpeter's technical uncertainty (actual miscues in some instances), this date is less than memorable, from both the repertoire and performance perspectives. Uninspired is a meaningful summation. It's not that the date is a failure, individually or collectively, but for anyone

who's heard these first-rate artists hundreds of times in other circumstances, it simply will not satisfy any preconceived expectations. Such a recording demonstrates that the greatest personnel will not necessarily always record the greatest music.

The State of Dorham's Art With Joe Henderson

A technical review of K.D. at this point will reveal the differences that had taken place in his performances since the Blakey-Roach years in the 1950s. As his development with Henderson occurred just a few years into the next decade, one would assume those differences not to be substantial. New interpersonal influences, however, have ways of dramatically altering even an established artist's individual conception and technical means of shaping creativity.

Tonal qualities

Dorham now exhibited a dark, probing sound, not necessarily a characteristic of either his Bird apprenticeship in the late 1940s or the Blakey-Roach years.

Compared to most standard technical norms, his sound could be classified as smaller (as opposed to round and full) and occasionally pinched. One writer even referred to it as an "astringent" sound, by which he may have meant dry or even austere. The downside is that such a sound is not ideally sought after; the upside is that it is fitting for the type of "snaky," bittersweet or blues-inflected creative effects that the trumpeter consistently employed to good advantage.

Melodic ideas

Throughout the 1950s, Dorham's melodic ideas were, in most instances, very respected in the improvisational sense. They were certainly:

- Clearly structured
- Cleanly executed
- Occasionally understated

During that period and in the 1960s, two technical factors enhanced his melodic creativity immeasurably:

- Subtle nuances of tone that critically influenced the type of feeling sought
- A variety of rhythmic accentuation that gave his phrasing an innate, unmistakable character

Dorham's melodicism never became overextended by technical excesses and remained purely functional in that it:

- Fit exclusively the performance environment in which it was rendered
- Acted as a readily identifiable organizer of his personal musical resources
- Contained a variety of frequently used phrasings
- Evolved with the utmost artistic integrity

Rhythmic feel

The trumpeter's established rhythmic feel remained intact and he did not show any inclination to adapt to other prevailing 1960s stylistic trends. Moreover, his consistently satisfying improvisations had deep roots in a blues sensibility. Lapses in rhythmic execution were almost always a direct result of Dorham's stretching for a phrase structure he didn't normally include, whether these lapses occurred in his blues sensibility or otherwise.

The Recordings

The early 1960s collaboration with Joe Henderson on Blue Note produced some of Dorham's most artistically successful recordings, though none of these were under his own leadership. The two best recordings are the Henderson-led *Page One* and *In 'n' Out*, which are reviewed below. (The third Henderson-led Blue Note CD with Dorham, *Our Thing*, is not being reviewed.)

Joe Henderson Quintet: *Page One*. Blue Note, June 1963. *Joe Henderson, tenor sax; McCoy Tyner, piano; Butch Warren, bass; Pete LaRoca, drums.*

"Blue Bossa"

This original unquestionably ranks as Dorham's most famous composition. As a 16-bar A-B medium-tempo bossa nova played twice, it can logically be interpreted as a 32-bar A-B-A-B form (8-8-8-8). Its melody is rhythmically structured in such a way as to be transformed easily into a more groove-oriented swinger. Tyner's 8-bar piano intro consists of neatly spaced, rhythmically dancing ideas.

Dorham commences his solo choruses (in 16-bar A-B form) by alternately snarling and then phrasing with a clearer tonality. After the initial chorus, to set up delightful mood contrasts, he concentrates almost exclusively on either deliberately sustained tones or playful, rhythmic contours.

Summarizing Henderson's 3 choruses, it's apparent that he plays notes with more jazz intensity and less of a bossa focus than does Dorham. Even so, the impression remains that Henderson is holding back in deference to Dorham's showcase.

For 4 choruses Tyner alternates technically impressive single-note lines and lightly placed chords based on Latin rhythm. Such an exquisite display of taste is rare in a pianist and brings to mind Hank Jones, Tommy Flanagan, Bill Evans and Herbie Hancock.

The ending melodic statement is preceded by a single Butch Warren bass chorus filled with dancing rhythmic motifs that are pure solo treasures. The unexpected outro consists of piano-tenor-trumpet interplay that's sure to please.

"Homestretch"

It is reassuring to be treated to that "feel good" up-tempo blues that everybody anticipates at the beginning of any CD. There should be at least one, or more, such selections in either F, B-flat, E-flat, or even C, for every blowing session released. Tyner's 24-bar intro functions beyond a curtain-raiser and is immediately heard as a fully engaged improv – not just the restrained type of uncommitted phrasing that often prefaces a melodic statement. The 12-bar theme is played twice in short-phrased melodic bebop contours.

After a tension-inducing 3-bar rest, Henderson spaces out his ideas in contained bursts for the balance of the initial chorus. There is repetitive phrasing in a holding-pattern approach to the second chorus from which he then emerges with full conceptual intensity. The third and fourth choruses flow similarly until he lessens the intensity as a structural setup for Dorham.

Because Henderson overlaps the trumpeter's anticipated entrance by 2 bars, K.D. extricates himself from

this slight improvisational collision by constructing a flat-out, no-holds-barred, hot, middle-register solo. Throughout choruses 2, 3 and 4, being refocused in his true element, he demonstrates real bebop-hard bop assertiveness.

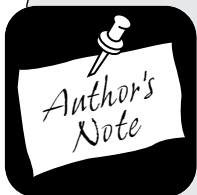
Tyner follows with 2 signature dancing, single-line choruses, alternating meticulously clean lines and tantalizing chord passages for the added rewards that come with repeated hearings. Those intriguingly voiced chords occur in the first 4 bars of choruses 3 and 4.

Henderson then initiates 4 choruses of exchanges with drummer LaRoca and maintains an easy-to-follow format by performing the first 4 bars of each chorus and allowing LaRoca to finish the remaining 8. The result? No overlap of exchanges from chorus to chorus. The ending melodic statement is, as usual, played twice for listener retention.

"Recorda Me"

Like "Homestretch," this is a Henderson original. It takes on a bossa nova character, this time in 32-bar A-B-A-B form (8-8-8-8). Because each 16-bar section is a complete, self-contained structural unit, it can also be analyzed as A-B (16) + A-B (16). One of the tenor saxist's best-ever compositions, it begins with a Tyner 8-bar intro, which can be thought of as the last 8 bars of this 32-bar form. Henderson's 2 tenor choruses (32-bar form) are happily melodic and rhythmically varied. Especially in the second chorus, he literally sings through his horn as if he's proud of his composition's foundation.

Unfortunately, there is again a 2-bar overlap into



*Author's
Note*

Auditioning Against Joe Henderson

During the 1960s, the Jack Pierson Trio became one of the more prominent small groups in Detroit, and I was privileged to be a permanent fixture in the pianist's groups for several years. One Sunday afternoon early in the spring of 1962, we were poised to perform a steady 4-nights-a-week engagement at the Counterpoint on Woodward Avenue near the Wayne State University campus. All we had to do was convince the club's owner via audition. Up to and including the final number of our set, we had no knowledge of any other groups vying for that same engagement.

After we had finished playing and I started to cart my equipment back to my car, a lean, distinguished-looking tenor man mounted the stand and began to assemble his horn. Pierson said to me, "Hey, isn't that Joe Henderson?" Looking behind me, I was startled to realize the magnitude of the Pierson trio's competition.

We stuck around to hear what turned out to be the Joe Henderson Quartet (Hugh Lawson, piano; Ernie Farrow, bass; and Teagle Fleming, drums) play a very scintillating four-tune set.

Guess who got the gig? No one in our group had to wait to hear from the owner. We already knew.

the beginning of Dorham's first chorus. This time the trumpeter calmly places his complete conceptual focus on the melodic and rhythmic character of the selection, never contrasting that by breaking into a harder-swinging double time in his second chorus. The only real solo blemish occurs in the last 8 bars of the second chorus, where he reaches for upper-register tension notes and doesn't hit them squarely.

Tyner's subtle alternation patterns, between crisply executed single-note lines and adroitly voiced and placed chord enhancements, is but one of the gems of his contemporary piano identity. In his second chorus, Dorham and Henderson provide a background accompaniment of harmonically satisfying sustained patterns in each A section (bars 1-8 and 17-24) that is an appropriately conceived complement to the pianist's idiom. The ending melodic statement concludes strongly on a sustained chord (without an outro or tag).

Joe Henderson Quintet: *In 'n' Out*. Blue Note, April 1964. *Joe Henderson, tenor sax; McCoy Tyner, piano; Richard Davis, bass; Elvin Jones, drums.*

"Punjab"

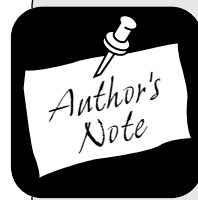
This composition impresses as an intriguing Henderson 16-bar + 2-bar tag medium-tempo original played twice. Its unusual structural breakdown consists of 6 bars of straight time (1-6); 4 in a vamp (7-10); 6 more of straight time (11-16); and the final tag of 2 bars.

The curious 8-bar intro is the 2-bar tag repeated 4 times in a call and response pattern between the horns and the pianist. Its format is 2 bars of call (1-2); 2 of response (3-4); 2 more of call (5-6); and finally 2 more of response (7-8).

Completely immersed in the melodicism of his composition, Henderson leads off for 5 choruses. It's worth noticing how effectively he negotiates the time-vamp-time format in each chorus.

Dorham establishes an immediate rapport with the harmonic framework, playing melodically up to his usual high standard. In all 4 of his choruses, there is evident pacing of phrasing, utilizing sustained tones as stepping-stones to busier rhythmic involvement. His is a totally captivating personal statement.

Tyner's 4 choruses of exquisite single-note lines interspersed with uniquely voiced chords (for that era) demonstrate his utmost confidence within all creative performance environments, regardless of personnel or repertoire circumstances.



"In 'n' Out," the Title Track

Joe Henderson's *In 'n' Out* recording ranks as an almost perfect contemporary straight-ahead document of jazz

evolution up to the mid-1960s. Its one shortcoming, believe it or not, is the title track, a Henderson 12-bar original consisting of a complex, problematic, but thoroughly swinging, melodic line (I dare listeners to hum this one).

It's possible a shorter take of this track would have eliminated the uncertainty Henderson and Dorham experienced and could have actually put the CD over the top.

All through Dorham's and Tyner's solos, Henderson must have been mentally reviewing his previous solo opportunity; possibly realizing that he hadn't imparted everything he originally had in mind, he comes back for 2 more choruses. The ending melodic statement is followed by the outro with an identical 2-bar call and response pattern as utilized in the 8-bar intro. This time, however, Tyner doesn't get the chance for a second response, because the horns end with a sustained chord on bar 6.

"Serenity"

There is an almost literal musical depiction of the tune's title as the 14-bar Henderson original is captivatingly stated twice. Note that it is not a 12-bar + 2-bar tag structural form, as bar 12 connects directly to a sustained tone in bar 13. Dorham's 2 solo choruses begin very deceptively, giving the impression that his sustained tones are placed to emphasize melodic phrasing until he begins to double-time extensively in bars 4-8. The listener then realizes that there will be an ongoing alternation between sustained tones and busier rhythmic activity.

Throughout 5 choruses, Henderson gradually and successfully builds, in his own contemporary manner, toward an exploratory improvisational pattern from simpler, controlled phrases to an increasingly abstract complexity. This is all executed consciously and meticulously so as not to lose the listener's interest.

Uninhibitedly fluid improv – highlighted by a right hand capable of elaborately decorating its own funda-

mental phrase contours – pervades Tyner’s 4 choruses. In 1964, there were few pianists capable of such technical elaboration.

Richard Davis’ 2 bass choruses will be the most difficult to grasp. Simplicity was hardly ever part of his creative mindset. As with the other tracks in this recording, listeners will be rewarded many times over through repeated exposures.

“Short Story”

Dorham composed this medium-tempo original in 32-bar A-B-A-B form (8-8-8-8) over a Latin rhythmic base. It easily qualifies as a jazz radio show signature. As it unfolds, a 16-bar intro increases rhythm section performer participation, with bars 1-4 initiated by Davis alone, 5-8 adding drummer Jones and 9-16 utilizing the full rhythm section sparked by Tyner. Stylistically, Davis’ 4-bar vamp sets the rhythmic energy in motion, and Tyner’s 8-bar chordal involvement establishes the harmonic framework.

The trumpeter executes 2 choruses of effortless improv that, on this day, proves he could go wherever he desired conceptually and technically. Henderson divides his 3 choruses into half melodically oriented deliberation (first A-B 16 bars) and half outer limits exploration of the original’s harmonic sequences (last A-B 16 bars).

Tyner builds toward chord-dominated phrasings by making the first 2 or 4 bars of each 8-bar section a strong multi-noted emphasis, from which more numerous chords gradually appear in solo development. The ensemble trades a single chorus of eights with Elvin Jones as the volcanic drummer plays off their A-section riff with coordinated independence expertise. The ending melodic statement concludes with a new ensemble outro of 16 bars. The listener now realizes that greatness has been on display throughout these whole proceedings.

“Brown’s Town”

In a traditional A-A-B-A form (8-8-8-8), Dorham’s medium-tempo original employs a call and response pattern between the horns and rhythm section. It is a majestic-sounding melody, stately performed with little rhythmic motion and a sustained notational emphasis.

The trumpeter’s fascinating first chorus is constructed seemingly with as few notes as possible to isolate the composition’s melodic appeal. His second chorus shows a marked contrast to the first, framed in a great deal of exploratory phrasing without losing thematic essence.

Tyner sets a pattern of chord dominance on the bridges of his 2 choruses, rendering these voicings at an elevated dynamic level. In this way, the bridge can be identified as a tension section, and the last A (bars 25-32), the release. Davis executes at full technical capacity and performance complexity, with all creative stops out. Again, he is the most abstract of the soloists. There is no Henderson tenor solo, possibly because he reserved this track as a feature for his artistic partner, Dorham.

LATE 1960s:

THE LATER CAREER YEARS

Back in the late-1950s Blakey-Roach years, Dorham began a frontline association with bari saxist Charles Davis. Next came bari saxist Cecil Payne, whose Strata East recording, *Zodiac: The Music of Cecil Payne*, is one of the few vital recordings featuring the trumpeter in his later years.

These affiliations signaled that Dorham was beginning the 1960s with a fresh sense of frontline instrumentation. He had hired Payne for the Blue Note *Afro-Cuban* date (review begins on 131) as well as the *Blue Spring* septet on OJC/Riverside. In turn, the trumpeter appeared on Payne’s *Patterns* on Savoy.

On Dorham’s *Memorial Album* – which was later reissued on Xanadu from an earlier Jaro independent label release – he shared a front line with Davis. This was also the case on Dorham’s *Jazz Contemporary* release (originally issued on the Time label).

The trumpeter’s apparent preference for a bari sax teammate, though, may actually have begun at his own 1953 *Kenny Dorham Quintet* date for the OJC/Debut label on which tenor saxist Jimmy Heath doubled on bari for a portion of the recording. Presumably, Dorham liked not only the contrast in register from the tenor, but also how the bari filled out the bottom of a frontline quintet, or similar-size small group. But what were the practical consequences of recording a total of five sessions with two relatively unknown bari players spread over a 15-year period?

First of all, bari sax doesn’t rank high on most jazz enthusiasts’ favorite sax list. In fact, it probably runs a very distant fourth behind tenor, alto and soprano sax. Bari artists Gerry Mulligan and Pepper Adams, each in his own way, made inroads into listeners’ tastes in the 1950s and 60s, but not to the extent that the often cumbersome-sounding saxophone ever became upper-

most in listeners' minds. If Dorham felt compelled to utilize a bari saxist in the late 1950s and into the decade of the 1960s, why not try to convince someone of Adams' stature to join him so that such an addition would bring at least some listener recognition to the group? Better still, frontline associations with a tenor saxist of the caliber of either Harold Land or Sonny Stitt, or an alto saxist in the mold of Lou Donaldson would certainly have increased Dorham's visibility far more than any bari player he could have teamed with.

After the Charles Davis association, Dorham did, of course, record impressively with alto giant Jackie McLean, resulting in *Inta Somethin'* for Pacific Jazz (review begins on page 144), *Matador* on United Artists and *Jackie McLean Quintet* on Blue Note. A more permanent Dorham-McLean small group configuration could have made a considerable impact under the right marketing conditions.

At that point, Dorham began his career-revitalizing relationship with Joe Henderson, but it, too, like many jazz world efforts, proved to be only a temporary boon. Henderson was destined to become a new creative force on the then current contemporary scene, but, with Dorham being 13 years his senior, the performance opportunities that presented themselves were often in separate spheres of activity.

Time marches on – as do musical styles

By the late 1960s, when K.D. was in his mid 40s, he faced more uncertainty, artistically and physically, than should be encountered by creative musicians in the established, mature phases of their careers. Remaining receptive to new stylistic directions is of prime importance when a career is stalled at such a critical juncture, but he had obviously desired to continue performing the bebop and hard bop vehicles with which he had been comfortable up to that point.

Such prominent trumpeters as Randy Brecker, Miles Davis and Freddie Hubbard no longer placed an exclusive emphasis on those styles, as it had already been determined that jazz fused with funk and rock outsold straight-ahead styles by a wide margin. That reality, however, did not seem to faze Dorham.

What changes, if any, did K.D. make in his later years with regard to stylistic approach? If there were any concessions at the outset of the decade of the 1970s, they concerned the fellow artists with whom he chose to surround himself. As a curious example, percussion-

ist Ronald Shannon Jackson, at that time recognized internationally for New Music explorations, was one of the younger eclectic artists who had the chance to appear with Dorham.

In Paul F. Berliner's *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (University of Chicago Press, 1994), Jackson reported that Dorham was very warm and lyrical and that playing with him was like playing with a jazz vocalist. Furthermore, Jackson said, he had to listen to the trumpeter a lot because of "the way he played and the way his tone was." The percussionist is further quoted as saying, "In order to enhance anything, you had to be right where he was, which would allow him to open the whole thing up, to get the flow going.... He was the type of person who would allow you to lay the foundation first and then would say, 'I'll play on top of that,' rather than the type of person who says, 'I'll lay the foundation, and you play around this.'"

Jackson's comments certainly suggest that Dorham might have been at least warming up to the valid approaches of more freewheeling artists who were following new stylistic persuasions. Volatile times led up to the 1970s and, more than ever, artists were searching for permanent new repertoire directions. To this author's knowledge, though, there simply isn't any recorded evidence to further substantiate these observations by the percussionist.

Dorham's recorded output between 1964 and 1972, the year of his death, is meager indeed. The standout is *Zodiac: The Music of Cecil Payne* on Strata East, a session obviously not even under the trumpeter's own name. Though hard to come by in either its original LP configuration or as an affordable CD, it nonetheless comes highly recommended. With a rhythm section of Wynton Kelly on piano, Wilbur Ware on bass and Albert Heath on drums, in addition to Dorham and Payne, no more incentive to acquire this rarity should be necessary.

IN CONCLUSION

Today's aspiring artists are super-conscious of technical prerequisites in every phase of their chosen endeavors and, of course, it's appropriate to let competitive juices flow to the fullest. But the old adage, "It's *what* you play, not *how* you play it," is still the truest indicator of pure talent. Dorham proved this conclusively in more than 20 years of top artist associations and affiliations, and occasionally as the leader of straight-ahead small groups. Students of jazz trumpet may possibly be critical of his

technical execution at various times in his career, but it's unlikely they will quibble over his:

- Note choices
- Phrase constructions
- Harmonic interpretations
- Stylistic repertoire directions

In a jazz arena where flashy technique garners great attention, Dorham focused on notes rather than superficial displays. At a time when the music that attracted the fans' attention was technically flamboyant, what Dorham played was musically subtle.

Sharing the same straight-ahead trumpet spotlight with Miles Davis in the mid-to-late 1950s, Dorham paled by comparison with Miles' artistic charisma and popularity that were so overwhelming.

K.D.'s musicianship, like that of fellow trumpeter Thad Jones, has never been fully appreciated by either U.S. critics or a fan base that has difficulty assessing any artist who doesn't receive a great deal of press. Conse-

quently, this chapter, plus the page 126 sidebar, "The Jazz Trumpet Hierarchy and Kenny Dorham," which is written from a historical perspective, are intended to lend a measure of reinforcement to Dorham's artistic stature in the international jazz community.

As a further remembrance, Dorham will live on in the minds of both jazz enthusiasts and musicians as the composer of "Asiatic Raes," "Blue Bossa," "Lotus Blossom," "Prince Albert" and "Una Mas." Most likely only musicians will acknowledge "An Oscar for Oscar," "Matador," "Minor's Holiday," "Short Story," "Sunrise in Mexico," "Sunset," "Whistle Stop" and "Windmill."

More than most other artists, Kenny Dorham very skillfully tailored his sound and creative language to the mood circumstances of a performance, drawing the ultimate out of any composition. Those improvisatory qualities are what will live on in the jazz world as the essence of the art itself.