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**Oscar Peterson**

***On a Clear Day***

***The Oscar Peterson Trio - Live in Zurich, 1971***

As time goes on and the true members of the Jazz Pantheon continue to diminish, the element of legacy takes on so much greater importance. So when a totally unheard treasure is discovered, it is a time for rejoicing; and when that treasure is one by a profound master like **Oscar Peterson**, even more so. With the Mack Avenue Music Group/Two Lions Records release of ***On a Clear Day: The Oscar Peterson Trio - Live in Zurich, 1971***, we are further blessed by the opportunity to hear an extremely rare version of the trio format for which the great man was so well known. The extraordinary tandem of bassist **Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen** and drummer **Louis Hayes** joined together only on one previous studio album – *Great Connection* – recorded prior to when this tour took place.

As anyone who understands the great art of Jazz knows the more an ensemble performs together, the greater the connection, the more perfect the synergy and, resultantly, the more rewarding the listening experience. This performance, recorded at the very end of their one tour, displays the group at the height of its majestic creative mastery. Peterson was not a leader who simply expected his sidemen to conform to his own preconception of what the music should be. Instead, he fed off of their individual artistry to form a unique entity for each particular manifestation of his trio concept.

While the longevity of his relationship with bass giant Ray Brown (most notably with drummer Ed Thigpen), and a shorter yet no less impactful stretch with the tandem of Sam Jones and Louis Hayes, both demonstrate the magic inherent in intense musical interactions, a fleeting foray with as masterful a creative spirit as Ørsted Pedersen can be similarly rewarding – as this album so richly proves. As Peterson wrote in his memoirs about the Danish bass master *“His melodic sense is impeccable, his choice of harmonic sequences is a pure delight to play with, and his time is flawless.”* And of his relationship with Hayes, he succinctly stated *“It broke my heart when Louis Hayes and I had to part company.”* Taking powerful inspiration from the new combination playing with him, Peterson reveled about it from the first night. *“I totally enjoyed myself throughout, throwing my all into this new feel behind me.”*

That spark is certainly evident from the music on this album, further honed by the natural merging of the three masterful artists into one three-pronged creative force.

As anyone familiar with Peterson’s special form of artistry would expect – particularly in live performance – the music is powerfully expressive, provocative and sometimes ferocious in its intensity. Peterson is generally in a take-no-prisoners mode as explosive runs build upon explosive runs, yet always with a loving sensitivity that enthralls while simultaneously taking away one’s breath. Ørsted Pedersen and Hayes are always as one with the master and together they create a seamless panorama of rich musicality and palpable excitement throughout this 60-plus minute set – as evidenced by the lengthy and wildly enthusiastic crowd response to each piece.

The eight tracks are an assemblage of songbook classics, standards and Western Classical inspired songs – all given that personal Peterson spin.

The set is bookended by lively tunes that have been uplifting spirits since the tumultuous 1930s – “The Lamp is Low” and “On the Trail,” respectively. The former is a blazingly explosive and breathtaking virtuoso excursion that sets the tone for the entire set; while the latter closes the concert out with an only slightly tempered tone of fiery swing.

Lerner & Lane’s “On a Clear Day” opens with a short piano vamp reminiscent of Miles Davis’ “All Blues” and quickly launches into a jaunty medium-tempo excursion beautifully punctuated by Hayes and briskly walked by Ørsted Pedersen. Rodgers & Hammerstein’s “Younger Than Springtime” is a driving medium-up tempo excursion, delivered with deliciously two-fisted aplomb by Peterson.

Benny Goodman’s “Soft Winds” sizzles in a delightful medium tempo and is so richly swinging that it makes you ache in rapture; while Bock & Harnick’s “Where Do I Go from Here?” is a palpably enjoyable sojourn in lilting swing.

Virtuosity meets Mastery at the crossroad of Utter Delight with the medley of Albert Hague’s and Arnold Horwitt’s “Young and Foolish” and Johnny Mandel’s “A Time for Love.” Peterson’s brilliant unaccompanied foray for the first half of the piece evokes Art Tatum in the purest form of homage – inspired by the immortal legend who plays such a major part in his evolution – but is all Oscar Peterson at his most inspired and personal. When he is joined by Ørsted Pedersen for a dazzling duo display of gorgeous telepathic interplay, the results are absolutely sublime.

Kurt Weill’s often-played “Mack the Knife” is given a most singular Peterson treatment with an extensive opening cadenza that blends balladry, blues, stride and even a touch of barrelhouse until the rest of the trio joins in for a rip-roaring scorcher of its closing half.

This music throughout is energetic, dynamic and so delightfully swinging at all times, filled with unflinching virtuosity, but never for its own sake – only in pursuit of the transcendent expression demanded by the music and the extraordinary spirit of **Oscar Peterson**.

Mack Avenue Music Group is doing a tremendous service to the art of jazz with its dedication to both some of the most outstanding artists of today and the importance of the music’s profound legacy. This is its third release in partnership with Two Lions Records. **Kelly Peterson**, Oscar’s wife, founder/director of Two Lions and maintainer of his immortal legacy says of the relationship, “The values I hold dearest, integrity, dedication to excellence, honesty, and trust – values that are an important part of Oscar’s legacy – are demonstrated in each and every member of the Mack Avenue team. It is a pleasure to work with people who share these values. I have tremendous respect for Mack Avenue Records and the people who are that company. I am very happy to have this second archival release of Oscar and his trio and look forward to the future and more to come as we continue together to honor and share Oscar’s legacy.”

For press materials on **Oscar Peterson**, Mack Avenue Music Group’s artists or its family of imprints (including album covers, promotional photos and logos), please visit [media.mackavenue.com](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001OXfKjSbu9kDyt2_19fGKo1wFGq0zQG3zvrZHpw0okm7hpxDuMY1vfoPBdfpkoE_QQvqi5mA1UQ7Cs2QNAlN5FGKWLLZ3_rC0IlXc5_7SIj5XP1F-818qZhPJn-yrYyXBirn5J3SdCfKOaKHYjUxqwE4w3Mc-U8VH&c=F6_MYDcz3S36a6hQRmnRSf8BFPEpjuAofzUfEDa7ITh-haoCuUqn6g==&ch=FjUKDz0dWm2CwEmX7vg6t6niFHqbhC1-ChsxXFxZR6Qsaq8g3CDEuA==)

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