

Alexander shows multiple facets

If an album cover lists a rhythm section of Ray Brown, bass, and Jeff Hamilton, percussion, then we are interested no matter who the lead player is.

You get no finer bass and drum work.

In the case of the new Monty Alexander recording, *Facets*, we ARE interested in the soloist because Alexander is one of the most influential jazz pianists today.

His appropriately titled recording covers a wide range of material, revealing many facets of Mr. Alexander, a player at home with any score placed in front of him.

Alexander, 46, was born in Jamaica and has lived in the United States since 1962.

His mastery of the jazz piano is built on the solid foundation of classical training and a fertile musical imagination.

Alexander deserves to be

heard by many more people than the established jazz audience.

Those taking some early tender steps into the jazz repertoire need music that is approachable and where the intent of the musician as he develops the basic theme is clear: ear-friendly music for the jazz neophyte.

This album includes two tunes familiar to most listeners: *When Johnny Comes Marching Home* and *I'm Walking*.

Alexander incorporates many ideas into *When Johnny Comes Marching Home*.

Percussion from Jeff Hamilton is suitably military as Alexander states the basic theme and there's an abrupt transition to a swing feel as Alexander begins his improvisations: some dizzying right-hand excursions along the scales before he brings us back



RAY BROWN

to the familiar melody.

More tumbling cascades of notes are found on *I'm Walking*.

Here, Jeff Hamilton introduces a cymbal sound I have never heard before: it's almost as if Mr. Hamilton can change key as well as rhythmic texture: it's that kind of dramatic effect.

Another approachable tune is *Hold 'Em Joe*.

Here too, Jeff Hamilton demonstrates exactly why he is a king of the jazz drum kit. His sound is not big or overpowering but the intricate rhythmic effects he sets up, making use of some rather unusual sounds are mesmerizing. He has a command of timing that is truly awesome.

On the Monty Alexander original composition, *Consider*, Ray Brown plays a full-toned counterpoint to Alexander's melody and improvisations.

Throughout there is that round Ray Brown bass tone, which has dominated jazz combos for more decades than he probably wants to mention.

Records
in review

with

Neil Macmillan



Brown and Hamilton were one half of the band L.A. 4 (with Laurindo Almeida and Bud Shank). They have played in Nanaimo (remember these jazz nights at Tio's restaurant on Stewart Avenue: Tio's left town and the old restaurant has burnt to the ground after a succession of other owners ran it).

Alexander's in a blues groove on his own tune *Blues for Dewey*. There's a rippling cascade of notes but this does not obscure that is at heart a blues tune.

• *Facets* by Monty Alexander with Ray Brown and Jeff Hamilton is on Concord Jazz: CCD-4108.

Fantastic *forro*: fun fun fun