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COUNTDOWN
TIME IN OUTER SPACE
THE DAVE BRUBECK QUARTET

ELEVEN FOUR / WHY PHILLIS / COUNTDOWN / SOMEDAY MY PRINCE WILL COME / CASTILIAN BLUES
CASTILIAN DRUMS / FAST LIFE / WALTZ LIMP / THREE S A CROWD / DANSE DUET / BACK TO EARTH



GRANDE AND BLACK WAIL, 1959, by FRANZ KLINE, Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Robert C. Scull, Courtesy of Sidney J. Leff

Ralph Gleason, syndicated columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, has written that "Brubeck has already acquired a reputation as a jazz composer from the popularity of his tunes, 'In Your Own Sweet Way' and 'The Duke' with other jazz musicians. Now, applying his talents to experiments in time, he is inviting them to follow his example. It is rather like breaking the four-minute mile.

"Once it has been done, others can suddenly do it, and I look to a great number of interesting developments from Brubeck's success. It will take first-class musicians (Brubeck's own group is the best he has ever had) but there is no shortage of these in jazz and their experimenting is one of the things that keeps the music interesting."

COUNTDOWN:



TIME IN OUTER SPACE

is the third in a series of recordings devoted to exploring rhythms unusual to jazz. The realization of (1) improvised cross-rhythms and (2) a broadened rhythmic base for jazz was preceded by twenty years of planning, training and test runs through countless unrecorded choruses.

Why this preoccupation with rhythms, considered foreign to jazz, when common time has served us long and well? The concept of music as the only art that captures Time has long fascinated me. Music is as concerned with Time, as architecture is with Space. Sound shatters time into fragments, which the musician has arranged in such patterns of periodicity that we say the music has rhythm. When these patterns fall in such precise relationships to one another that they seem to follow a natural law, we say that the music has a pulse of its own. This inner pulse belongs to the music of the world, whether expressed in common time or an exotic 9/8. Harmony or melody may stem from a musical tongue so different from ours that a knowledge of modes or scales is prerequisite for communication. But rhythms – even complex ones – can be instinctively felt.

It is a tribute to the ingenuity of jazz musicians that they have created such great variety within such strict limitations. From the beginning, jazz has felt constrained in 4, and the overleaping of bar lines and the pushing at metric barriers has been as persistent as the struggle to extend harmonic conception beyond the 1, 4, 5 progression. Upon hearing *Time Out*, Dr. Willis James, musicologist and jazz historian, remarked that jazz should never have been restricted to the limitations of 2 and 4, and notated on the spot a Negro field holler in 5/4. As jazz began to be written and arranged, it was convenient to borrow measured time from Western tradition (as it had borrowed instruments, harmonic progressions and the song and march forms). The music was squeezed into the common time measure, even though the jazz artist knew that this was a poor approximation of what he actually played.

Gradually, the rhythms became less complex as musicians thought increasingly in terms of harmonic, melodic and solo improvising and less of the African concept of collective improvising. Lost was that giddy feeling remarked upon by so many Europeans when they first heard the unexpected, shifting accents of jazz. Neither syncopation nor cross-rhythms were new to Europeans. What was new was the concept of each musician improvising independently to contribute to a group much in the manner of African music.

"Jazz," I wrote in a January 1960 issue of *Down Beat Magazine*, "for various social and cultural reasons has primarily emulated its European heritage, and in so doing has unfortunately lost a great deal of the rhythmic drive which African music offers... New and complex rhythm patterns, more akin to the African parent, are the natural direction for jazz to develop. This new interest in the African heritage of jazz is but one of many awakening forces. We are on the threshold of a revival of the so-called Classic Jazz, but on a higher esthetic plane in keeping with the jazz musician's higher conception of music, using freely the techniques of counterpoint, polytonality and polyrhythms." Along with other musicians, I felt that jazz must be freed from unnecessary restrictions if it were to continue to develop as an expression of a free individual. Within my own groups, I have worked toward that end.

Even as a very young musician I felt that the African heritage of jazz had been neglected, and early in my professional years leaned heavily on rhythmic improvisation, often trying the polyrhythmic approach of laying a second distinct rhythm over the established beat of the rhythm section. This sometimes leads bassmen and drummers to vow

that either they (never!) or I (No, not ever!) were lost, when in reality neither of us was, but the concept of layers of rhythm was not accepted in the jazz of that day. As early as 1946 my Octet was incorporating in arrangements some of the polyrhythmic ideas we had developed in solo improvising. Cal Tjader was the first drummer I worked with who understood this concept and together in the Trio we made numerous excursions into mixed time signatures. An early Quartet example is "Lover," a simultaneous 3/4-4/4 arrangement on *Jazz: Red, Hot And Cool* (CL 699). When our 1956 recording of "Someday My Prince Will Come" (*Dave Digs Disney*, CL 1059) was released in England, critic Steve Race wrote: "It established in a mere eight minutes an important new fact: that the most complex cross-rhythms need not detract from a performance of melodic charm and that even rhythmic experiment may be firmly rooted in the swinging tradition of small-group jazz." No comment could have made me happier, because this was the summary of our purpose.

Our roots, however, were still 4/4. The next step was to move into slightly different time signatures to broaden the base for cross-rhythms to 5/4, 7/4, 9/8 or 11/4, because no matter how spirited and complex our playing was within the limitation of 4/4, we were still utilizing only part of our rhythmic heritage. Jazz, I feel, will continue to move into different rhythms as our understanding of rhythms increases, so that we can feel free to improvise without constraint. I know we are free when we no longer have to count, and already most of the time signatures on the series of recordings are as natural to us as 4. (7/4 remains the most challenging for improvising, but I figure if a whole Greek culture can feel seven, we can, too!)

Time in music, as in Space, is relative to that which surrounds it. The challenge remains to arrange the patterns, no matter what the time signature, in that precise relationship that causes the music to have a pulse of its own — in other words, to swing in orbits other than the traditional 4.

"Countdown" opens with a rhythmic ten-note theme stated by the tympani, played by Joe Morello, and moves into a "walking boogie-woogie" pattern. "Countdown" anticipates the change in conventional time relationships, however, by throwing in an extra note in the boogie eight-note pattern so that instead of the usual "8 to the bar," my left hand plays ten, using the typical octave skip. At concert performances, Morello will substitute tuned tom-toms for the tympani, or will use the elbow-pressure technique of varying the pitch of the tom-toms.

"Eleven Four" possesses a feeling of free flight. Paul Desmond's melodic line floats effortlessly over, in and around rhythmic groupings of 5-3-3. Composed by Desmond, this tune reflects his personal lyricism and rhythmic contribution in both the written and improvised portions.

"Why Phillis" is a blues waltz by Eugene Wright. Although conceived primarily as a vehicle for bass in the "walking four" tradition, it is written in 3/4 time. This particular tune is a striking example of the interplay of improvisation, where the original concept of the tune becomes altered. To follow a chorus-by-chorus description, it will be helpful for the listener to know

that the harmonic pattern on which we build is that of the blues, alternating one chorus in F with a chorus in B-flat. In the fourth chorus, you can hear the piano "comping" with upper-register tenths (Count Basie style) in a definite rhythm of four, while Gene spins a bass chorus that glides between 3 and 4, and Morello maintains his steady 3/4 beat. Realizing Gene is staying in 3, rather than moving to 4 as we had discussed, I follow his lead through the fifth and sixth choruses. However, in my piano solo (seventh chorus) I superimpose a 4/4, determined to kick Gene out of 3. Gene moves. He plays an even quarter-note line behind the piano, while Morello continues on the basic beat of 3/4. In the eighth chorus, I begin to play a swing bass, adding a new group of accents against the already existing rhythms, creating a polyrhythmic pattern. Wright takes a solo flight and concludes with the original waltz.

When the 1956 version of "Someday My Prince Will Come" was released in England (1958), Steve Race wrote in a *Melody Maker* review: "'Prince Will Come' is an exercise in time-signatures, and as such is unique in jazz. There have been many explorations in jazz harmony and counterpoint. A number of people have tried their hand at jazz in waltz time, notably

Max Roach... Brubeck has explored the possibilities of double, triple and quadruple time in simultaneous performance... To sum up: Dave Brubeck's 'Someday My Prince Will Come' breaks entirely new ground in the field of jazz rhythms." A 1962 version is included



in this album because (1) we have progressed polyrhythmically in the intervening six years and (2) it has been the seed for many subsequent time experiments. The present version is structured the same as the original: drums in 4, bass in 3 and piano and alto free to choose between them or to move into a completely different time signature. Paul's last chorus is extremely polyrhythmic, with accents of groups of two within a framework of 4/4 with a basic pulse of 3/4. Under my chorus, Morello's bass drum can be heard in accents in 2, while his hands continue in 3/4 time. Gradually, I move toward a more definite 2 or 4, nudged by Joe's insistent bass drums. Gene stays in 3. In the second half of my second chorus, the right hand is in A-flat major, while the left hand remains in the tonic key of F major.

8 A rehearsal of "Castilian Blues" was included in a documentary film prepared for CBS-TV's *Twentieth Century* program. More harmonically adventurous than its 5/4 predecessors, it exemplifies the ease with which the Quartet improvises in this rhythm even on a new tune. Desmond plays as fluently over this Latinized 5/4 as he would in a more conventional time. "Castilian Drums" is a 5/4 vehicle for percussion. Morello's solo reflects his interest in the improvised table drumming of India. By phrasing over the bar line in fast double time in the piano chorus, I attempt to capture the flavor of flamenco guitar.

The next four tracks are themes from a ballet, *Maiden In The Tower*, on which I am currently working. They are presented in this context because the themes of the ballet are written in varying time signatures in accordance with the character portrayal. Thus, the Hero is characterized by a 4/4 rhythm and the Heroine in waltz time. As new characters are added, each dance is in a separate,

distinctive rhythm so that when the ballet is performed it will offer visual as well as audible cross-rhythms and interrelationships. The titles are descriptive of the ballet situations. "Fast Life," for example, is the first solo of the high-spirited Hero, who always dances in 4, except for the few bars in which he teasingly mimics the Heroine. "Waltz Limp" is danced by the Heroine, who has lost her shoe. "Three's A Crowd" is a dance for three principal characters: the Hero in 4/4, answered by the Heroine in 3/4, and the third character (who makes it a crowd) dances in 2/4. "Danse Duet" opens with a rubato statement of the theme by the piano, followed by a stately 4/4 pas de deux. A transitional phrase moves into waltz time, which is designed as a solo dance for the Heroine. She is then answered by the Hero who dances a solo in 4. The piece closes with a restatement of the solo piano theme.

"Back To Earth" is one of these spontaneous, almost accidental tunes, played at a relaxed moment of a recording session. It brings all of us back to the terra firma of simple swinging 4/4 blues.

— DAVE BRUBECK
1961

Upon rereading my original liner notes for *Countdown*, I find little to add and only one correction. When I referred to the concept of layers of different rhythms as being not accepted in the jazz of the forties, I should have qualified the statement by saying most of the jazz of that period, as I am sure there must have been exceptions to this general rule, even if I was unaware of them.

— DAVE BRUBECK
2003

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Dave Brubeck has exerted a great deal of influence on American jazz. I can remember when the early Dave Brubeck records on Fantasy were a great source of stimulation to me in breaking into new areas of "serious" jazz music.

The Dave Brubeck influence has reached the four corners of the earth, and now is finding new dimensions. Great musicians are following Dave Brubeck's experiments in new time mediums, in different time signatures — 3/4, 5/4, 7/8, 11/4 — heretofore hidden dimensions in jazz.

It seems that the next step in influence will be from polyrhythms (shifting of the accents on different tempos of the beat in any given bar), to polytempos (different tempos at the same time — here exemplified in the Brubeck *Time In Outer Space*). You can see and feel the new direction in jazz in this album: it is self-evident in the complicated but swinging rhythms of Dave Brubeck, Joe Morello and Gene Wright, beneath the florid style of Paul Desmond.

— Teo Macereo

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and
Vocalion, Col-
umbia's holdings
came to include seminal
music by Mamie Smith,
King Oliver, Louis Arm-
strong's Hot Fives and
Sevens, Fletcher Hender-
son, Duke Ellington, Bix
Beiderbecke, Bessie
Smith, Ethel Waters, Ted-
dy Wilson, Billie Holiday,
Mildred Bailey and Red
Norvo, Count Basie, Ben-
ny Goodman, Harry
James, Gene Krupa and
Woody Herman.
Columbia's introduction
of the 33 1/3 LP in 1948
launched two de-
cades of record-
ings that empha-
sized influen-
tial small groups led by
Erroll Garner, Dave
Brubeck, Miles Davis and
Thelonious Monk. Larger
ensembles were also docu-
mented, including the
unequaled Miles Davis/
Gil Evans collaborations,
the combustible mid-size
groups of Charles Mingus
and some of the early merg-
ers of jazz and classical
music involving Gunther
Schuller. Columbia's his-
toric first live recordings at
the Newport Jazz Festival
in 1956 returned the Duke
Ellington Orchestra to its

deserved
position of jazz
preeminence.
Another evolutionary step
was being taken by the end
of the '60s. This was fusion,
the earliest stages of which
can be traced through sev-
eral of Miles Davis' Colum-
bia recordings. The tramp-
eter's innovations in-
spired his sidemen to cre-
ate groups of their own
such as Weather Report,
featuring Wayne Shorter
and Josef Zawinul, Chick
Corea's Return To Forever,
Herbie Hancock's
Headhunters, John
McLaughlin's
Mahavishnu Orches-
estra and the Tony
Williams Lifetime, all
of which made impor-
tant recordings on Colum-
bia during the '70s. At
the same time, the label
documented pioneers of
acoustic new music with
important recordings by
Ornette Coleman, Charles
Mingus, Bill Evans, Dexter
Gordon and Woody Shaw,
plus the more pop-oriented
instrumentals of Bob
James and Lee Ritenour.
Columbia again led the
way when the jazz tradi-
tion was revisited by
a generation

of
young
musicians
in the '80s.
Wynton and
Branford Marsal-
is, Terence Blan-
chard and Donald
Harrison, Marcus Rob-
erts, James Carter,
David Sanchez and Leon
Parker are among this
new wave of musicians
that has sparked a new
interest in jazz through their
Columbia recordings. At
the same time, Columbia
continued to document jazz
in all its varieties, from
the classic sounds of Doc
Cheatham to the uncate-
gorizable creations of
Henry Threadgill. Add
the strong reissue activi-
ty under the Legacy
Imprint and Col-
umbia continues
its history as
jazz's most
comprehen-
sive home
base.

The
Legacy of
Columbia
Jazz