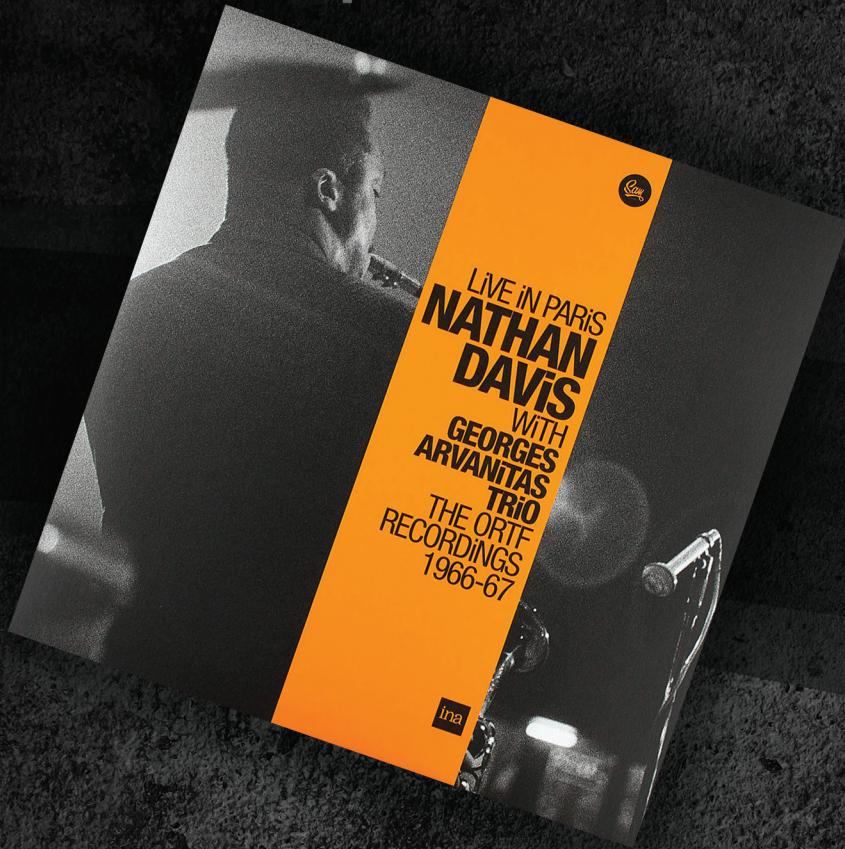


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The Vinyl Adventure Exclusive **Ken Kessler reviews Nathan Davis LP** **Live In Paris - Sam Records SR20/2-V2 (3LPs)**

Unusually, but entertaining no thoughts of compromise, this magnificent 3LP set uses only five of its six sides. This is an indication of how much care has gone into ensuring the best conditions for a collection of rare broadcast performances, guaranteeing that the sound will be as good as it gets – a crucial concern as its potential audience will consist almost entirely of jazz-obsessed audiophiles.

Jazz – like classical music and soundtrack scores – is one of the foundational genres of audiophilia, for two solid reasons. Its devotees exemplified the art of careful

listening when jazz was on its ascent, and the demographic back at the dawn of stereo was (and remains) the most likely to invest in decent [read: costly] sound equipment. This luxurious set, then, is a throwback to the Golden Age of Analogue, and there's an unexpected bonus for hi-fi enthusiasts with a system of the highest resolution in its forensic abilities: you get to compare the sounds of three venues.

Sub-titled “with Georges Arvanitas Trio – the ORTF Recordings 1966-67”, Live In Paris is the kind of set you expect from sessions with French origins. While jazz is a US invention,

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the French embraced it from the beginning and treated it as they did film noir: with respect elevating it to the same level as classical music. Davis was an academic, a professor music and director of jazz studies at the University of Pittsburgh, and a remarkable saxophonist who – like Gordon Dexter and other African-American jazz musicians – moved to Paris to best savour the appreciative audience, living there from 1961-1969.

Existing in a transitional period between 1950s cool and bebop, and the more radical adventures of the 1960s, the performances here recall a decade previous because there is an indelible link between Davis and Charlie Parker, explained in the copious liner notes. Equally, the influence of Coltrane and others is easily detected, and one suspects that Davis' scholastic approach is responsible for the eclecticism. As a result of his command of all things jazz, the influences are varied and easily identified, and that includes blues and contemporary soul.

While Davis played with countless musicians, here he is accompanied by the highly-regarded George Arvanitas Trio on piano and organ, Jacky Samson on bass and Charles Saudrais on drums. The last track on the album – also the earliest of the three

sessions – finds Davis with a different trio, consisting of Jack Diéval on piano, Jacques Hess on bass and Franco Manzecchi on drums.

Where the listening test comes in is the sound of the locations. The broadcasts were recorded by Office de Radiodiffusion - Télévision Française (ORTF), the French national agency which, from 1964 to 1975, provided public radio and television in France, much like the BBC. But instead of a single in-house studio, the sessions contained were recorded in various Parisian addresses: Théâtre Champs-Elysées, Musée d'Art Moderne and Studio 105 Charles Trenet, Maison de la Radio. An ideal opportunity for the listener to assess those oft-discussed qualities of soundstage, atmosphere and space recreation, and you will hear the differences.

While spatial concerns might seem trivial compared to the in-the-rook presence of the saxes and – especially – Arvanitas' piano, the physical manifestations of the rooms are the enablers in recreating the time machine effect that sends you back to gigs which took place between 1965-1967. The transfers and pressings are so good that hearing this will be easier than you think. C'est merveilleux!

-- Ken Kessler



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