

Sonny Rollins

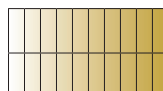
Blue Note/Music Matters 1542

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Rollins' first Blue Note release is sometimes referred to as "Sonny Rollins Vol. 1". Sonny is accompanied by Donald Byrd, Wynton Kelly, Gene Ramey and Max Roach and the result is far more than the "unpretentious session" described in the liner notes. For me, this is just another flavour of perfection and a flavor I never tire of. Most who purchase this set, however, will be in for a surprise because of the sound. This is an early Blue Note, recorded only in mono, and the sound is so good that the later stereo recordings pale in comparison.

Especially on the first cut, 'Decision', Van Gelder captured a spread among the instruments both in stage width and depth seldom captured by stereo recordings to this day. It isn't just stage presentation either—every nuance of Max Roach's drum kit is captured to perfection. Few recordings in my collection pull off the shimmering quality of the cymbals as well. The CD reissue of the session has done a disservice to this album, and I wonder that its reputation among today's critics may suffer as a result of its lackluster CD reproduction. Music Matters has righted this situation with the Hoffman/Gray team unearthing a sonic gem whose brilliance as a work of art can be truly appreciated. **DD**

RECORDING



MUSIC

