

The
PIANO
of
NATHANIEL ADAMS COLES
“NAT KING COLE”

Born: Birmingham, Alabama, March 17, 1917
Died: Santa Monica, California, Feb. 15, 1965

Introduction:

Who did not know Nat King Cole? Oslo Jazz Circle did, and we hated him, and his singing, contrasting so much to our dear jazz music!! However, somebody noticed that he also could treat the piano, and his creations on that instrument became highly praised, particularly those where he was sitting in with the jazz greats, including JATP. We never cared for his early trio recordings, and fifty years later it was interesting to note that those also had something to offer...

History:

Three of his brothers, Isaac, Fred and Eddie, became professional musicians. The family was raised in Chicago. By 1934 Nat was leading own 'Royal Dukes' in Chicago; in 1936 he made his first recordings in band led by his brother Eddie (who was then playing string bass). Soon afterwards toured with a 'Shuffle Along' revue company, left the show and settled in Los Angeles, did local 'gigs' before forming own trio (1937). From 1944 onwards achieved international fame with a series of 'best-selling' records. During the 1940s also continued to record with all-star jazz personnels, but during the latter part of his life was known principally as a vocalist. A cancer victim, he played his last engagements in 1964 (ref. John Chilton).

Message:

I have decided that this should be a piano solography omitting the more than numerous trio recordings with so much vocals taking our attention away from King's great piano soloing. Maybe we should do something about that later?

NAT KING COLE SIDEMAN PIANO SOLOGRAPHY

EDDIE COLE'S SOLID SWINGERS

Chi. July 28, 1936

Kenneth Roane (tp), Tommy Thompson (as, ts), Bill Wright (ts), Nat King Cole (p), Eddie Cole (b, vo-90806), Jimmy Adams (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Decca:

| | | |
|---------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 90806-A | Honey Hush | As below. (FM) |
| 90806-B | Honey Hush | Solo 32 bars. (FM) |
| 90807-A | Stomping At The Panama | Soli with ens 4, 14 and 32 bars. (FM) |
| 90808-A | Bedtime | Soli with ens 20 and 4 bars. (S) |
| 90809-A | Thunder | Soli with ens 48 and 8 bars. (F) |

It is tempting to start with a quote from Leonard Feather's liner notes: "Though the arrangement and the other soloists represent a rather undistinguished brand of small combo jazz that was then prevalent, Nat's contribution stands out sharply in relief as did Louis Armstrong's a decade earlier in surroundings to which he was similarly superior". Only nineteen years old, we have a very talented piano artist with roots obviously from Earl Hines. The tunes are not standard, but possibly composed and arranged by NKC, and to me, sorry to say, have not very much appeal. We get quite a lot of piano, but difficult to get a clear impression of what he really wants to do. Nevertheless I shall not protest at another quote: "In sum, this 1936 date is more than an historical curiosity, serving as it does to show the setting in which the great musicianship of Nat Cole underwent its baptism".

NAT KING COLE TRIO

LA. Oct. 1938

Nat King Cole (p, vo), Oscar Moore (g), Wesley Prince (b).

Note: Instrumentals below are marked with a *

Eight titles were recorded for Standard Transcriptions:

| | | |
|---|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | Mutiny In The Nursery | Intro 4 bars. Solo 18 bars. (FM) |
| | F. D. R. Jones | Intro 4 bars. Solo 16 bars. (FM) |
| | The Sheik Of Araby | Obbligato. Solo 14 bars. (F) |
| | The Blue Danube | Intro. Solo. (FM) |
| | Button Button | Intro 4 bars. Solo 16 bars. (FM) |
| | Jingle Bells | No solo. (FM) |
| | Swanee River | Intro 4 bars. (FM) |
| * | With Plenty Of Money And You | Intro. Soli. (F/FM) |

LA. Oct. 1938

Same. Four titles:

| | | |
|--|---------------------------|--|
| | Don't Blame Me | Intro 2 bars. Soli 32, 16 and 12 bars to coda. (M) |
| | Lullaby In Rhythm | Soli 2 and 2 bars. (M) |
| | Dark Rapture | Solo 8 bars. (M) |
| | By The River Sainte Marie | Intro 4 bars. Soli 16 and 4 bars. (M) |

LA. Nov. 1938

Same. Eight titles:

| | | |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | The Wiggly Walk | Intro. Solo 8 bars. (M) |
| | Flea Hop | Solo 16 bars. (FM) |
| | Chopsticks | Intro. Soli 4, 4 and 4 bars. (FM) |
| | Patty Cake, Patty Cake | Solo 8 bars. (FM) |
| | Blue Skies | Intro. Soli 4 and 4 bars. (FM) |
| * | Liza | Intro. Soli. (FM/F) |
| | Three Blind Mice | Intro. Solo 16 bars. (M) |
| * | Caravan | Solo. (F) |

Two years have passed since NKC's first recording session, and things have happened; he has now his own trio and is now a well known entertainer on the West Coast. I have violated my own promise and included his complete 1938 output, twenty titles. To proceed with similar detailed survey of the coming years is not tempting. I still hate this kind of trio with collective vocals, almost everything in (fast) medium tempo, and with guitar and piano continuously disturbing each other, never letting a music idea develop into something really exciting. On the other hand; NKC's brief piano soli are always challenging, and demonstrate clearly that he already at the age of 21 is a performer of high class. If one is able to concentrate upon the piano and shut everything else out (there is occasionally some fine guitar playing also), there is much to enjoy. Taking the four instrumentals first; I think he messes up "Liza" and "Caravan", certainly not making them memorable and serious, but "With Plenty ..." shows his greatness in uptempo, and "Don't Blame ..." is also an important item. Possibly he feels more relaxed with his vocal items, inserting soli here and there in competition with his guitarist. In fact, there is only a few of those sixteen items not worth getting a chance, and you will probably not be surprised and acknowledgeably. Summing up; you will hopefully understand that to spend one's last years on a NKC complete-piano-solography is stretching it too far, even when we are dealing one of the really great pianists in the world of jazz!!

LIONEL HAMPTON**Hollywood, May 10, 1940**

Lionel Hampton (vib, p-49676, dm-49677), Nat King Cole (p), Oscar Moore (g), Wesley Prince (b), Al Spieldock (dm), Helen Forrest (vo-49675).

Four titles were recorded for Victor:

| | | |
|---------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 49674-1 | House Of Morgan | Solo 16 bars. (M) |
| 49675-1 | I'd Be Lost Without You | Solo 8 bars. (S) |
| 49676-1 | Central Avenue Breakdown | Acc. (p). (FM) |
| 49677-1 | Jack The Bellboy | Soli 32 and 32 bars. (F) |

Of course Lionel Hampton is the boss here, but the NKC trio is the base of the success. The highlight is the very upper tempo "Jack ..." where Hamp chooses the drums as his vehicle, and where the cooperation with NKC is remarkable, also containing two solo sections swinging like 'mxx'. On the other end, a beautiful slow "... Without You", and a medium swinger also with a very personal piano solo.

LIONEL HAMPTON**Hollywood, July 17, 1940**

Lionel Hampton (vib, vo-49932,33), Nat King Cole (p, vo-49932,33), Oscar Moore (g, vo-49932,33), Wesley Prince (b), Al Spieldock (dm), Helen Forrest (vo-49935).

Four titles were recorded for Victor:

| | | |
|---------|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| 49932-1 | Dough-Rey-Mi | Solo 16 bars. (M) |
| 49932-2 | Dough-Rey-Mi | As above. (M) |
| 49933-1 | Jivin' With Jarvis | Solo 16 bars. (M) |
| 49934-1 | Blue Because Of You | Intro 4 bars. Solo 24 bars. (S) |
| 49935-1 | Ghost Of A Chance | Solo 8 bars. (S) |

The second Hampton session is even more exciting with a magnificent NKC!! His "Blue ..." is certainly the most prominent piano item till now, and it is only natural that he should be allotted a full chorus! "Ghost ..." is of similar quality but only eight bars here. The other two titles are lovely swinging, and the two Hamp sessions together represent a definite entrance for NKC onto the highest level of never-to-forget jazz pianists!!

NAT KING COLE TRIO**NYC. July 10, 1941**

Nat King Cole (p), John Simmons (b), Walter Green (dm).

One title was recorded by Jerry Newman at Monroe's Uptown House (Per Borthen collection):

| | | |
|------|------------------|---|
| 7:21 | I Surrender Dear | Intro 4 bars to solo 32 bars. (SM) to solo 128 bars. Acc. (b) 64 bars. Solo 112 bars. (FM) to solo 8 bars to coda. (SM) |
|------|------------------|---|

A magnificent recently discovered treasury which has been shelved at home for half-a-century without anybody noticed! For seven minutes in excellent sound, NKC shows that he certainly was part of the development of modern jazz taking place in Harlem, a fireworks of creative piano artistry!

JAM SESSION**L.A. May 30, 1942**

Eddie Barefield (cl), Hubert "Bumps" Myers (ts), Nat King Cole (p), Slam Stewart (b).

Acetate, presented by Lewis Porter:

Lady Be Good

Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (FM)

Postscript of Jan. 2, 2024: What a start on the new year!! A magnificent piano solo, you need time to believe it, even after listening!!

LESTER YOUNG - KING COLE TRIO

L.A. July 15, 1942

Lester Young (ts), Nat King Cole (p), Red Callender (b).

Four titles were recorded for Philco (12"), supervised by Norman Granz:

| | | |
|----------|---------------------|--|
| Van 1000 | Indiana | Intro 4 bars. Acc. (ts). Solo 64 bars. (FM) |
| Van 1001 | I Can't Get Started | Intro 2 bars. Acc. (ts). Solo 32 bars. (S) |
| Van 1002 | Tea For Two | Intro 4 bars. Acc. (ts). Solo 64 bars. (M) |
| Van 1003 | Body And Soul | Intro 4 bars. Acc. (ts). Solo 16 bars. Acc. (b). Solo 8 bars. (S) |

This is the real beginning of NKC's piano solography! Although I had some unpopular afterthoughts in the Lester Young solography, feeling he was leaving the magnificent vintage area for uncharted territory, and also somewhat dubious to the slightly passive solo format, there is only hurrahs and flag waving with regard to the pianist, now a mature and experienced artist of 25 years. I had better quote Loren Schoenberg on Mosaic to get balance and more professionalism: "This is one of the most poetic and profound sessions that Young ever made. . . . And it isn't just Young's playing that amazes; Nat Cole unleashes a barrage of singular pianistic devices that call into question the whole notion that "modern" jazz piano began with the appearance of Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk a few years later". For the first time we can hear him stretching out to not only one but even two choruses, and what a creative improviser!! He combines modern inspiration with solid swing tradition, and he is brilliant in any tempo. I suggest you study carefully LS's liner notes to get better insight that I can give.

DEXTER GORDON QUINTET

L.A. ca. late 1943

Harry Edison (tp), Dexter Gordon (ts), Nat King Cole (p), probably Red Callender or possibly Johnny Miller (b), Clifford "Juicy" Owens (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Mercury (12"):

| | | |
|------|--------------------|--|
| 1892 | I Found A New Baby | Intro 4 bars. Solo 64 and 4 bars. (FM) |
| 1893 | Rosetta | Intro 4 bars. In ens 32 bars. Solo 64 bars. (FM) |
| 1894 | Sweet Lorraine | Intro 4 bars. Solo 32 bars. (S) |
| 1895 | I Blowed And Gone | Intro 4 bars. Solo 24 bars. Acc. (b). (M) |

This session was received by yours truly with more enthusiasm than the previous one, back then. Playing them both together now, I am somewhat surprised, but the reason was that it is more swing oriented, and with a young Dexter entering the world of jazz greats. NKC is again showing how uniqueness, excellent soloing on three very exciting medium items, particularly "Rosetta" (dig 'Hines' here!), and then a fantastic highlight in the slow "... Lorraine", could it been done better!?

NAT KING COLE QUINTET

L.A. Feb. 1944

Shad Collins (tp), Illinois Jacquet (ts), Nat King Cole (p), Barney Kessel (g), Gene Englund (b), J. C. Heard (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Disc (12"):

| | | |
|----------|------------------------------------|--|
| 1010D504 | Heads | Intro 4 bars. Solo 32 bars. (M) |
| 1011D505 | Pro-Sky | Intro 4 bars. Solo 36 bars. Acc. (b). (FM) |
| 1012D506 | It Had To Be You | Intro 4 bars. Solo 32 bars. (M) |
| 1013D507 | I Can't Give You Anything But Love | Intro 4 bars. Solo 32 bars. (M) |

NKC seems to pick his tenorsax companions with much wisdom! The third '12" session' with even more swing than the others, gives him another opportunity to play full chorus on all items, although we miss a ballad this time. Three lovely blues choruses on "Pro-Sky" inspire to be the highlight, but then comes an amazing "... Had You", and then comes an amazing "Heads", and then comes an amazing "... But Love", so play them all and marvel at one of the greatest jazz piano artists ever!

JAZZ AT THE PHILHARMONIC**LA. July 2, 1944**

Collective personnel: Shorty Sherock (tp), J. J. Johnson (tb), Illinois Jacquet, Jack McVea (ts), Nat King Cole (p), Les Paul (g), Red Callender, Johnny Miller (b), Lee Young (dm), Carolyn Richard (vo-“... Love”).

Eight titles were recorded at the Philharmonic Auditorium:

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Lester Leaps In | Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. Solo 8 bars. (FM) |
| Tea For Two | Intro 4 bars. In ens 32 bars. Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (M) |
| Blues | Solo 4 choruses of 12 bars. Duet with (g). (FM) |
| Body And Soul | Intro 4 bars. Solo 32 bars (S) Solo 16 bars. (FM) |
| The Man I Love | Intro 8 bars. (S) |
| I've Found A New Baby | Intro 8 bars. In ens 32 bars. Solo 64 bars. (F) |
| Rosetta | Intro 4 bars. (M) |
| Bugle Call Rag | Solo 24 bars. Acc. (b). (F) |

NKC is present from the JATP-beginning, also a natural choice since he is resident on the West Coast. The concert is also a real treasure of jazz piano, because here this giant gets more blowing space than on any other preserved session! Starting with “Lester ...” he plays with great physical strength and at the same time full of surprising twists. Then a magnificent “Tea ...” in a pleasant medium tempo, faintly recorded in the beginning, the original ideas piling upon each other, unforgettable! He open and opens up the fast medium “Blues”, and the joyful sounds in the background in the background may well be his; it would have been ours if we had been there! On “... Soul” he plays a wonderful chorus in ordinary tempo, then changes it upwards, to return with a brief solo in that tempo later. Then “... New Baby”, do you believe your ears? The solo makes me think of Mel Powell with the same organization 1 ½ years later, another piano giant with the same inexhaustible inspiration. Shamefully he does not get soloing on “Rosetta” but treats “Bugle ...” perfectly. To sum up; this is an unforgettable JATP-session for many reasons, and NKC is certainly one!!

same date

Nat King Cole (p, vo), Les Paul (g), Johnny Miller (b), Lee Young (dm).
One title:

| | |
|----------------|---------------------------------|
| Sweet Lorraine | Intro 4 bars. Solo 16 bars. (S) |
|----------------|---------------------------------|

Nice vocal too, but it is the imaginative piano solo that is the highlight!

JAZZ AT THE PHILHARMONIC**LA. July 30, 1944**

Illinois Jacquet (ts), Nat King Cole (p), Red Callender (b), Lee Young (dm).

Two titles were recorded at the Philharmonic Auditorium:

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| One O'Clock Jump (NC) | Intro 4 bars to solo 24 bars. (FM) |
| Lady Be Good (NC) | Intro 4 bars to solo 64 bars. Solo 64 bars. Acc. (b). Solo 8 bars. (F) |

The start of “One ...” drowns in noise, but note his surprises in the second chorus. The highlight though is the very fast “Lady ...”, wow! Note that these items for some reason stop at approximately 78 rpm. length. Postscript of Oct. 2023: But the rest of “... Good” is now excavated, more great piano!!

same

Nat King Cole (p), Johnny Miller (b). One title:

| | |
|------|--|
| Liza | Intro 8 bars to solo 3 choruses of 32 bars to coda. (F) |
|------|--|

same

Collective personnel: Russell Jacquet, Cappy Oliver (tp), Corky Corcoran, Illinois Jacquet, Jack Mc Vea (ts), Nat King Cole (p), Barney Kessel (g), Johnny Miller (b), Sid Catlett or Rabon Tarrant (dm).

Postscript of Oct. 2023: Most of this concert has now become available, though not yet issued. Two jam session titles:

| | |
|----------------|---------------------------------|
| Rosetta | Intro 4 bars. Solo 64 bars. (M) |
| Bugle Call Rag | Solo 28 bars. (F) |

Postscript of Oct. 2023: The appearance of this concert means the most for NKC and his magnificent piano playing! Both these jam items are highly noteworthy! And finally the two minutes of "Liza", wow!!

CAPITOL JAZZMEN

Hollywood, March 30, 1945

Bill Coleman (tp), Buster Bailey (cl), Benny Carter (as), Coleman Hawkins (ts), Nat King Cole (p), Oscar Moore (g), John Kirby (b), Max Roach (dm), Kay Starr (vo-600,01). Also issued as The International Jazzmen. (Unissued material: James Accardi collection).

Four titles were recorded for Capitol:

| | | |
|----------|------------------------|---|
| 599-1 | You Can Depend On Me | Intro 4 bars to solo 16+8 bars, (cl) on bridge. (SM) |
| 599-2 | You Can Depend On Me | As below. (SM) |
| 599-3mst | You Can Depend On Me | Intro 4 bars to solo 16 bars. (M) |
| 599-4 | You Can Depend On Me | As above. (M) |
| 600-1 | If I Could Be With You | Intro 4 bars. Acc. (vo). (SM) |
| 600-2 | If I Could Be With You | As mst below. (SM) |
| 600-FS | If I Could Be With You | Intro 6 bars (NC). (SM) |
| 600-3mst | If I Could Be With You | Intro 10 bars. Acc. (vo). (SM) |
| 601-1 | Stormy Weather | Intro 4 bars. Acc. (vo). (S) |
| 601-2mst | Stormy Weather | Acc. (vo). (S) |
| 601-3 | Stormy Weather | Acc. (vo). (S) |
| 602-1 | Riffamarole | With ens. (F) |
| 602-2 | Riffamarole | With ens. (F) |
| 602-3 | Riffamarole | As below. (FM) |
| 602-4 | Riffamarole | As below. (F) |
| 602-5mst | Riffamarole | With ens. Solo 24 bars. (F) |

An exciting session with starstudded personnel, but the appearance of many alternate takes gives it an even more important status. And there are tempo changes, as well as changes in the structure. Concentrating upon NKC, his contributions here are extremely important, since he is heard more or less the whole session through, if not with soloing then accompaniment, and the notations above give only the most prominent. He shows that he is a fantastic improviser, even in the introductions to "If I Could ...". Or the four versions of "... Depend ...", so different you won't believe it! Or five "Riffamaroles", even in the ensembles he moves around with no effort, makes variations all the time. Even the "... Weather"s are highly interesting with his background for Kay Starr. NKC strengthens his position in 'piano-heaven's hall-of-fame' with this session!!

HERBIE HAYMER QUINTET

LA. June 9, 1945

Charlie Shavers (tp), Herbie Haymer (ts), Nat King Cole (p), John Simmons (b), Buddy Rich (dm).

Five titles were recorded for Sunset:

| | | |
|----------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| 110-0 | Black Market Stuff (NC) | Soli 8 and 16 bars. (M) |
| 110-1 ms | Black Market Stuff | Soli 8, 16 and 8 bars. (M) |
| 110-2 | Black Market Stuff | As -1. (M) |
| 110-3 | Black Market Stuff | Soli 8 and 32 bars. (M) |
| 11-BD | Laguna Leap (NC) | Intro 2 and 2 bars. (F) |
| 111-1 | Laguna Leap | Intro. Solo 64 bars. (F) |
| 111-2 | Laguna Leap | As -1. (F) |
| 111-3 ms | Laguna Leap | As -1. (F) |
| 112-1 | I'll Never Be The Same | Soli 8 and 8 bars. (S) |

| | | |
|----------|--------------------------|---|
| 112-2 ms | I'll Never Be The Same | As above. (S) |
| 113-1 ms | Swingin' On Central | Intro. Solo 24 bars. Acc. (b). (FM) |
| 113-2 | Swingin' On Central | As above. (FM) |
| 142/143 | Kicks / Honeysuckle Rose | Intro 4 bars. Solo 32 bars. Acc. (b). Duet with (tp). (FM) |

Nice swing session with good sound and the complete date preserved, including false starts and alternate takes, the latter giving name to the LP-issue: "Anatomy Of A Jam Session". There is much bebop in NKC's piano playing here, being rather laidback on "... Stuff", but on "... Leap", possibly the session highlights with an unearthly tempo, he almost takes it too far in his opening bars, but just almost, being so confident about what he is doing. Lovely slow tempo on "... The Same", and only Teddy and Mel can match Nat's elegance in playing brief interludes like this. He opens "... Central" with borrowing Basie's "Swingin' The Blues" and teases the trumpeter by taking his final phrase as a starting point for his own solo. Finally "Kicks", after some fooling around the guys get started, and the piano solo here could be used as a demonstration example of NKC's blend of the tradition and modernism. Important session!

THE KEYNOTERS

LA. Feb. 16, 1946

Willie Smith (as), Nat King Cole (p), Red Callender (b), Jackie Mills (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Keynote:

| | | |
|-------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 121-1 | I Can't Believe That YILWM | Solo 32 bars. (SM) |
| 121-2 | I Can't Believe That YILWM | As above. (M) |
| 122-1 | The Way You Look Tonight | Solo 28 bars. (S) |
| 122-4 | The Way You Look Tonight | As above. (S) |
| 123-1 | Airiness A La Nat | Soli 32, 4 and 4 bars. (F) |
| 123-2 | Airiness A La Nat | As above. (F) |
| 124-3 | My Old Flame | Intro 4 bars. Solo 8 bars. (S) |

"This session was made during Keynotes's (Harry Lim) second trip to Los Angeles. It is unavoidable to mention that the star is the pianist, the man who 'unfortunately' was such a good singer that it overshadowed his brilliance as a true jazz pianist!" - quoting myself from the Willie Smith solography, but I cannot compete with Dan Morgenstern on his liner notes: "Had he been unable to sing, we would rank him next to Tatum" (!). Nice to have him in a soft quartet, where every tone can be heard clearly. You may go for his elegant fast playing on "Airiness ...", or dig the two "... Believe ..."s (read Dan's notes!). But stop for a while with "... Flame"! Although this is Smith's baby and only one bridge for Nat, why not enjoy is comping? However, nothing can challenge his magnificent rendering of "... Tonight", played in an unusually slow tempo!!

LESTER YOUNG / NAT KING COLE

Hollywood, ca. March 20, 1946

Lester Young (ts), Nat King Cole (p), Oscar Moore (g), Johnny Miller (b), Buddy Rich (dm), Ernest "Bubbles" Whitman (mc).

AFRS Jubilee no. 184, two titles:

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| These Foolish Things | Intro 4 bars. Acc. (ts). Solo 8 bars. (S) |
| Lester Leaps In | Intro with (mc) 8 bars. Solo 24 bars. (FM) |

NKC takes the first bridge on "... Things", highly delicate, dig this one! Fine start for the piano solo on "... Leaps In" but the guitar spoils it.

JO STAFFORD VOCAL ACC. BY

PAUL WESTON & HIS ORCHESTRA

Hollywood, March 28, 1946

Ray Linn (tp), Herbie Haymer (ts), Heinie Beau, Fred Stulce, Harry Schumann (reeds), Nat King Cole (p), Dave Barbour (g), Artie Shapiro (b), Nick Fatool (dm), Paul Weston (dir).

Four titles were recorded for Capitol:

| | | |
|--------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1054-3 | Baby, Won't You Please Come Home | Intro. Acc. (vo). (S) |
| 1055-2 | Cindy | Intro. Acc. (vo). Solo 22 bars. (F) |
| 1056-2 | Ridin' On The Gravy Train | Intro. Acc. (vo). Solo 8 bars. (SM) |
| 1057-3 | I'll Be With You In Blossom Time | Intro. Acc. (vo). |

Solo 8 bars. (SM)

Any session with Nat King Cole on piano is worth noticing, and this one is also a jazz oriented one with much soloing alternating with the fine vocal!

LESTER YOUNG / BUDDY RICH TRIO LA. late March/early April 1946

Lester Young (ts), Nat King Cole (p), Buddy Rich (dm).

Eight titles were recorded for Clef:

| | | |
|-------|------------------------|--|
| 348-2 | Back To The Land | Intro 4 bars. Solo 36 bars. (S) |
| 349-1 | I Cover The Waterfront | Intro 4 bars. Soli 24 and 8 bars. (S) |
| 349-2 | I Cover The Waterfront | Intro 4 bars. Soli 16 and 4 bars. (S) |
| 350-2 | Somebody Loves Me | Intro 4 bars. Solo 64 bars. (M) |
| 351-2 | I've Found A New Baby | Intro 4 and 4 bars. Solo 64 bars. (F) |
| 352-1 | The Man I Love | Intro 4 bars. Soli 32 and 8 bars. (S) |
| 353-1 | Peg 'O My Heart | Intro 4 bars. Solo 32 bars. (S) |
| 354-1 | I Want To Be Happy | Intro. Solo 32 bars. Acc. (dm). (F) |
| 355-1 | Mean To Me | Intro 4 bars. Soli 32 and 8 bars. (SM) |

Almost four years after Pres/Cole's first trio session, this time with bass being replaced by drums. The transparency of this format makes you hear every detail my all three of them clearly, and there is a world of excitement to discover by the courageous. The three of them know each other so well that the the trio works like an organic unity, and the listing above of the piano soli may be somewhat misleading, because NKC plays all the way, in and out and around, with things you have never heard before. The more one listens concentratedly to his music, the more surprised and impressed one will be; a master of true improvisation. Also this time it is unnecessary to try to go into details, not only because it is too complicated for an amateur like me, but because Loren Schoenberg in his liner notes has done it for us, read and listen together!!!

NAT KING COLE TRIO WITH GUESTS LA. March/April 1946

Charlie Parker, Benny Carter, Willie Smith (as), Nat King Cole (p), Oscar Moore (g), Johnny Miller (b), Buddy Rich (dm).

AFRS Jubilee no. 186, two titles:

| | | |
|---------|------------------|---------------------------------|
| Medley: | Tea For Two | Acc. (as-WS). (SM) |
| | Body And Soul | Acc. (as-BC). (S) |
| | Cherokee | Intro 4 bars. Acc. (as-CP). (F) |
| | Ornithology (NC) | Intro 4 bars. (FM) |

Extremely exciting medley, but for NKC's piano only academic interest. Also, the "Ornithology" does not really seem to belong here.

METRONOME ALL STARS NYC. Dec. 14, 1946

Charlie Shavers (tp), Lawrence Brown (tb), Johnny Hodges (as), Coleman Hawkins (ts), Harry Carney (bar), Nat King Cole (p), Bob Ahern (g), Eddie Safranski (b), Dave Tough (dm), Sy Oliver (arr).

Rehearsal session, one title:

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Sweet Lorraine | Intro 8 bars. With ens 8 bars. Solo with (bar) 8 bars. (SM) |
|----------------|--|

NYC. Dec. 17, 1946

Same except Buddy Rich (dm) replaces Tough. Frank Sinatra (vo-37177), Nat King Cole, June Christy (vo-37178).

Two titles were recorded for Columbia; lots of piano accompaniment wherever there are vocals, and also:

| | | |
|-----------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| 37177-BD1 | Sweet Lorraine | Intro with (b/dm) 8 bars. (SM) |
| 37177-3 | Sweet Lorraine | As above. (SM) |
| 37177-BD2 | Sweet Lorraine | As above. (SM) |
| 37177-2 | Sweet Lorraine | As above. (SM) |
| 37177-BD4 | Sweet Lorraine | As above. (SM) |

| | | |
|-----------|----------------|---|
| 37177-BD5 | Sweet Lorraine | As above. (SM) |
| 37177-1 | Sweet Lorraine | As above. (SM) |
| 37178-4 | Nat Meets June | As take 1. (SM/FM) |
| 37178-3 | Nat Meets June | As take 1. (SM/FM) |
| 37178-BD2 | Nat Meets June | Acc. (bar) 12 bars. (SM) |
| 37178-2 | Nat Meets June | As take 1. (SM/FM) |
| 37178-1 | Nat Meets June | Acc. (bar) 12 bars. (SM) 12 bars 2/2 with (dm). (FM) |

On the surface this is not an important NKC piano session, but listening closer one will find that he is active more or less all over, behind singers and soloists. His introductions on "Sweet ..." are not much different, but note as highlights his brief chases with drums on "... June".

GENE NORMAN's "JUST JAZZ" Pasadena, Ca., June 23, 1947
 Charlie Shavers (tp, vo-"The Blues"), Willie Smith (as, vo), Stan Getz (ts), Red Norvo (vib, vo), Nat King Cole (p, vo), Oscar Moore, Barney Kessel (g), Johnny Miller (b), Louie Bellson (dm).
 AFRS "Just Jazz" from Civic Auditorium, four titles ("The Blues", unissued, James Accardi collection):

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| How High The Moon | Intro 8 bars. Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (M) |
| Body And Soul | Intro 4 bars. Soli 8 and 24 bars. (S) |
| The Blues | Intro 4 bars. Solo 24 bars. (SM) Solo with ens 36 bars. (FM) |
| I / Charlie's Got Rhythm | Acc. (b) 64 bars. (F) |

NKC's voice will soon take over more or less completely, a deep loss for jazz. Again we have good examples of his playing, as in "Body ..." with 'ordinary' playing first but using block chords on the last solo. This device is also used to great success in the third chorus of "... The Moon". This session cannot compare with the 1944-JATP but has interesting details everywhere, as usual.

METRONOME ALL STARS NYC. Dec. 21, 1947
 Dizzy Gillespie (tp), Bill Harris (tb), Buddy DeFranco (cl), Flip Phillips (ts), Nat King Cole (p), Billy Bauer (g), Eddie Safranski (b), Buddy Rich (dm), Pete Rugulo (arr). The Stan Kenton Orchestra added on 2934.
 Two titles were recorded for Capitol:

| | | |
|--------|----------------|----------------------------------|
| 2933-3 | Leap Here | As below. (FM) |
| 2933-4 | Leap Here | Intro 2 bars. Solo 32 bars. (FM) |
| 2934-4 | Metronome Riff | Solo 8 bars. (M) |

Lots of good music on this mini-session, and NKC's soli on the two takes of "Leap ..." are certainly among the most exciting to happen, but note how he with confidence introduces "... Riff".

NAT KING COLE LA. Aug. 15, 1956
 Harry Edison (tp), Nat King Cole (p, vo), John Collins (g), Charlie Harris (b), Lee Young (dm).
 Five titles were recorded for Capitol:

| | | |
|----------|------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 15788-10 | You Can Depend On Me | Intro 4 bars. (S) |
| 15789-8 | Candy | Intro 8 bars. Solo 16 bars. (SM) |
| 15790-4 | Sweet Lorraine | Solo 16 bars. (S) |
| 15791-5 | It's Only A Paper Moon | Solo 32 bars, last 16 with (tp). (M) |
| 15792-3 | Route 66 | Solo 24 bars. (M) |

LA. Sept. 14, 1956

Same except Willie Smith (as) replaces Edison.
 Four titles:

| | | |
|----------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| 15895-10 | Don't Let It Go To Your Head | Solo 8 bars. (SM) |
|----------|------------------------------|-------------------|

| | | |
|------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 15896-11 | You're Looking At Me | Acc. only. (S) |
| 15896-alt. | You're Looking At Me | Acc. only. (S) |
| 15897-7 | Just You, Just Me | Intro 8 bars. Solo 32 bars. (FM) |
| 15898-8 | I Was A Little Too Lonely | Intro 2 bars. Solo 16 bars. (M) |

LA. Sept. 21, 1956

Same except Juan Tizol (vtb) replaces Smith.
Four titles:

| | | |
|----------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 15920-5 | Caravan | Solo 16 bars. (F) |
| 15921-11 | The Lonely One | Solo 8 bars. (S) |
| 15922-1 | Blame It On My Youth | Solo 8 bars. (S) |
| 15923-14 | What Is There To Say? | Intro. Solo 4 bars. (S) |

LA. Sept. 24, 1956

Same except Stuff Smith (vln) replaces Tizol.
Four titles:

| | | |
|----------|------------------------------|--|
| 15936-5 | Sometimes I'm Happy | Soli 8 and 8 bars. (S) |
| 15937-3 | I Know That You Know | Intro 4 and 4 bars. Solo 32 bars. 24 bars 4/4 with (vln). (F) |
| 15938-11 | When I Grow Too Old To Dream | Acc. only. (SM) |
| 15939-14 | Two Loves Have I | Acc. only. (S) |

Excellent concept by Capitol, to team up NKC with four different horns on four sessions, giving everybody a chance to play! Only too bad that this seems to be the end of him as a pianist, later his enormous popular commercial and non-jazzy vocal takes completely over. There are fine moments on all four sessions, note some of the brief and slow soli, but it seems that those with Edison and Smith are the most exciting. Play everything but at least try "Candy", yet another "... Lorraine", "Just You ...", "... Too Lonely" and "... You Know" also with some hot fiddle.

NAT KING COLE WITH THE JATP LA. Oct. 15, 1957

Personnel including Roy Eldridge (tp), Stan Getz (ts), Nat King Cole (p).
NBC TV-Show, one title has NKC (p):

| | | |
|------|--------------------|--|
| 1:49 | I Want To Be Happy | Intro 8 bars. With ens 32 bars. Acc. (tp) 16 bars. Acc. (ts) 16 bars. Solo 16 bars. (F) |
|------|--------------------|--|

A lively piece to end this solography! Less than two minutes long it still manages to give an excellent example of NKC's masterly piano artistry!

I am sure there are beautiful piano playing also in the seven years to come, but please volunteer yourself for some research!

...ooo...