

The  
**TENORSAX**  
of  
**THEODORE ROLLINS**  
**“SONNY”**

Born: NYC. Sept. 7, 1930

*Introduction:*

I became familiar with Sonny Rollins' music very early and bought his "Way Out West" album, then I was hooked by this fantastic musician! I heard him live at Birdland 1958 (see main text), yeah! He was our 'modern' hero!!

*Early history:*

Played altosax from 1944, changed to tenorsax in 1946, started work as professional musician in NYC. 1947. Rehearsed with Thelonious Monk for several months in 1948. Played with Art Blakey in 1949, with Tadd Dameron, Bud Powell and in Chicago with drummer Ike Days. From 1949 to 1954 recorded intermittently with number of leading bop musicians and groups, including J. J. Johnson, Charlie Parker, Fats Navarro, Bud Powell, Max Roach, Art Blakey, Thelonious Monk and the Modern Jazz Quartet. His most frequent associate during these early years was Miles Davis, with whom he performed in clubs from 1949 and recorded from 1951. In 1955, while overcoming his dependence on drugs, he worked in Chicago and in December joined the Clifford Brown – Max Roach Quintet. Remained with Roach until May 1957, then performed briefly in Davis' quintet, thereafter, however, he has led his own groups. In 1956 came the first of a series of landmark recordings under Rollins' own name. During the years 1956 – 1958 Rollins was widely regarded as the most talented and innovative tenor saxophonist in jazz. Nevertheless, he was discontented: he could not find compatible sidemen, saw shortcomings in his own playing, and suffered from poor health. For these reasons he voluntarily withdrew from public life from August 1959 to November 1961. During this period of retirement his habit of practicing on the Williamsburg Bridge in New York became legendary. On resuming his career Rollins had improved his already prodigious skills, but his style was now considered conservative. In an effort to rejoin the vanguard of jazz fashion he began in mid-1962 collaborating with Don Cherry, Billy Higgins and other musicians playing free jazz (ref. The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz).

## SONNY ROLLINS SOLOGRAPHY

**BABS GONZALES AND HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Jan. 20, 1949**

Bennie Green, J. J. Johnson (tb), Julius Watkins (frh), Sonny Rollins (ts), Linton Garner (p), Art Phipps (b), Jack Parker (dm), Babs Gonzales (vo).

Two titles were recorded for Capitol:

3393	Capitolizing	Solo 24 bars. (F)
3394	Professor Bop	Solo 16 bars. (FM)

SR's originality is present from the very first bar! In his two blues choruses on "Capitolizing" he has some reed trouble, but otherwise plays with inspiration, and "... Bop" with some tribute to Bird confirms this good impression.

**BABS GONZALES AND HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. April 27, 1949**

J. J. Johnson (tb), Tony Scott (fl), Don Redman (sop), Sonny Rollins (ts), Wynton Kelly (p), Bruce Lawrence (b), Roy Haynes (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Capitol, no SR on "When Lovers They Lose" but:

3779	St. Louis Blues	Solo 20 bars. (FM)
3780	Real Crazy	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
3781	Then You'll Be Boppin' Too	Solo 20 bars. (FM)

Not yet nineteen years old, SR already plays like an experienced musician. His style is already completely individual, with a rhythmic conception pointing towards the future. Note his self-assured entrance on "... Blues" and his easy, flowing solo on "Crazy". On "... Too", quoting four bars of "Flying Home", Babs sends SR into almost two blues choruses of good but not outstanding quality.

**J. J. JOHNSON's BOPPERS** **NYC. May 11, 1949**

J. J. Johnson (tb), Sonny Rollins (ts), John Lewis (p), Gene Ramey (b), Shadow Wilson (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Savoy:

36-130-1	Audobon	Breaks. Solo 32 bars. Soli 2 and 4 bars. (FM)
36-130-3	Audobon	Breaks. Solo 32 bars. Soli 4 and 4 bars. (FM)
36-131	Don't Blame Me	No solo. (S)
36-132-2	Goof Square	Solo 24 bars. (FM)
36-132-4	Goof Square	Solo 36 bars. (FM)
36-132-8	Goof Square	Solo 36 bars. (FM)
36-133-3	Bee Jay	Solo 36 bars. (F)
36-133-5	Bee Jay	As above. (F)

SR's first great challenge, as key participant in an important bebop session, and he strengthens the impression given from the previous two sessions. Even the tb/ts ensembles sound different from similar combinations due to the unique sound of SR's horn. "Audobahn" and "Goof ..." are also composed by him. His playing has not at all matured, and he is lightyears away from his incredible performances a decade later. Yet he is not only interesting here because of his later developments, but also because his music is utterly original; he just does not play like anybody else. He seems to warm up during the session, on "Audobahn", the first title, he is somewhat unsure at times. He gets no solo space on "... Blame Me" but is heard prominently behind JJJ's trombone. However, when he starts to play the blues in upper tempi, things start to happen! The two last takes of "Goof ..." are excellent, and "Bee Jay" tops the session; note the first chorus on take 3 and the last chorus on take 5!!

**J. J. JOHNSON's BOPPERS** **NYC. May 26, 1949**

Kenny Dorham (tp), J. J. Johnson (tb), Sonny Rollins (ts), John Lewis (p), Leonard Gaskin (b), Max Roach (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Prestige:

20-B	Elysé	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
20	Elysé	As above. (FM)
21-C	Opus V	Solo 16 bars. (F)

22-C	Hi-Lo	Solo 24 bars. (FM)
22	Hi-Lo	As above. (FM)
23-D	Fox Hunt	No solo. (F)

This session has three excellent horn men, and Max shall have more than his share of honour for the general high quality of the music recorded. However, the solo space per person is small, and while SR's soli are of similar quality as two weeks before, this session cannot quite be said to have the same tenorsax importance.

#### **BUD POWELL's MODERNISTS**

**NYC. Aug. 8, 1949**

Fats Navarro (tp), Sonny Rollins (ts), Bud Powell (p), Tommy Potter (b), Roy Haynes (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Blue Note:

360-1	Bouncing With Bud	Solo 16 bars. (M)
360-2	Bouncing With Bud	As above. (M)
360-3	Bouncing With Bud	As above. (M)
361-2	Wail	Solo 32 bars. (F)
361-3	Wail	As above. (F)
362-1	Dance Of The Infidels	Solo 12 bars. (M)
362-2	Dance Of The Infidels	As above. (M)
363-1	52nd Street Theme	Solo 32 bars. (F)

For most older collectors, presumably this session was their first encounter with SR's tenorsaxophone; this was the case for me. I remember how excited I was about this music, everything seemed to be wonderful and opening up new horizons. Bud and Fats were of course the main focus of interest, but the bass and drums also seemed to be out of this world. And then this tenorsaxophone, undeveloped and yet with something special not heard before. A hard, angular attack, inventive but not without difficulties in implementing his ideas, SR seemed to be a very interesting performer. Very soon we learned about his more recent capabilities; his fantastic sessions for Blue Note, Prestige and Contemporary ten years later. It was then of course fashionable to listen to his "youthful sins" like this session. When reviving the encounter with this early SR, the excitement is as great as ever! Not yet 19 years old, he plays with great authority, like Lucky Thompson five years earlier. There is no reason to single out any of these items in particular, what SR develops here has had a great importance for the whole future of modern jazz.

#### **MILES DAVIS SEXTET**

**NYC. Jan. 17, 1951**

Miles Davis (tp), Bennie Green (tb-128,29,31), Sonny Rollins (ts), John Lewis (p), Percy Heath (b), Roy Haynes (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Prestige:

128-A	Morpheus	Solo 24 bars. (F)
129-B	Down	Solo 12 bars. (SM)
130-1	Blue Room	No solo. (S)
130-2	Blue Room	Solo 16 bars to coda. (S)
131-A	Whispering	Solo 32 bars. (M)

**same date**

Sonny Rollins (ts), Miles Davis (p), Percy Heath (b), Roy Haynes (dm).

One title, issued as **SONNY ROLLINS QUARTET**:

132	I Know	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars to coda. (M)
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SR enters the fifties one year to late, working with Miles Davis in the latter's first recording date for Prestige. It seems rather unrehearsed and experimental, "Blue Room" even close to practice than serious cuts, and in my opinion it does not quite hold together, although Miles himself and the others occasionally play very nicely. "Morpheus" is a very fast blues, too fast to give good results. "Down", also a blues, has however a pleasant tempo, letting SR continue as he left the forties, as one of the most promising of the new upcoming tenorsax stars. "Whispering" also has a nice but not really outstanding solo. Probably "I Know", SR's feature number, should be considered his most interesting performance from this session, with Miles' piano playing as a rare and interesting side attraction.

**MILES DAVIS ALL STARS****NYC. Feb. 17, 1951**

Miles Davis (tp), J. J. Johnson (tb), Sonny Rollins (ts), Kenny Drew (p), Tommy Potter (b), Art Blakey (dm).  
Broadcast from Birdland:

Theme (JWSS)	
Evonce (Out Of The Blue)	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (F)
Half Nelson	Solo 5 choruses of 16 bars. (FM)
Tempus Fugit	Break to solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (F)
Move	Solo 4 choruses of 32 bars. (F)
Theme (JWSS) (NC)	

These Birdland programs have of course great historical value for several reasons. SR plays strongly but the tempi are in general so fast that the performances sound somewhat forced, and one is not likely to play this very often.

**MILES DAVIS ALL STARS****NYC. June 2, 1951**

Personnel and place as above.

Theme	
Move (Moo)	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. Solo 4 bars. (F)
Half Nelson	Solo 6 choruses of 16 bars. (FM)
Down (Mick's Blues a.o.)	Solo 4 choruses of 12 bars. (M)
Theme (NC)	No solo.

On the very fast "Move", Blakey is the front figure during the tenorsax solo, and "Art Blakey All Stars" would have been a better name for the group. SR is better on the other two items where the tempo is more humane, and he seems to thrive particularly good on the medium "Down".

**MILES DAVIS SEXTET****NYC. Oct. 5, 1951**

Miles Davis (tp), Jackie McLean (as-229,30,31,32), Sonny Rollins (ts), Walter Bishop (p), Tommy Potter (b), Art Blakey (dm).  
Seven titles were recorded for Prestige:

228	Conception	Solo 48 bars. (F)
229	Out Of The Blue	Solo 32 bars. (M)
230	Denial	Solo 32 bars. (F)
231	Bluing	Solo 60 bars. (SM)
232	Dig	Solo 96 bars. (FM)
233	My Old Flame	Solo 16 bars. (S)
234	It's Only A Paper Moon	Solo 64 bars. (M)

This is in general a better session than that of Jan. 17, and Miles is steadily developing as a soloist. SR is also still in a maturing phase, and while his creativity is surpassed by nobody, here has so much reed trouble, that it does not only disturb the listener but influences the improvisations themselves in a negative way. The best items seem to be those in slow tempi; "... Flame", "Bluing" and also "... Paper Moon".

**SONNY ROLLINS QUARTET****NYC. Dec. 17, 1951**

Sonny Rollins (ts), Kenny Drew (p), Percy Heath (b), Art Blakey (dm).  
Eight titles were recorded for Prestige:

267	Time On My Hands	Solo 48 bars to coda. (S)
268	Mambo Bounce	Straight 24 bars to solo 48 bars to straight 24 bars. (M)
269	This Love Of Mine	Solo 48 bars to coda. (SM)
270	Shadrack	Straight with rhythm 32 bars. Break to solo 32 bars. Straight with rhythm 32 bars. (FM)

271	Slow Boat To China	Solo 64 bars. Soli 4, 4 and 20 bars. (FM)
272	With A Song In My Heart	Solo 4 choruses of 32 bars. Solo 32 bars. (F)
273	Scoops	Straight 24 bars to solo 24 bars. 24 bars 4/4 with (dm) to straight 12 bars. (M)
274	Newk's Fadeaway	Part of intro 4 bars to solo 64 bars. Soli 24, 4 and 4 bars. (FM)

The first session under SR's own leadership, and the general impression is very good, although he is yet immature and uneven compared to five years later. Sometimes he is brilliant, at other times seemingly unsure on how to proceed. A tuned piano and better supervision demanding an extra take here and there would have been appropriate. He seems best in the ballads; "Time ..." and "This Love ..." are both impressive and hint at an enormous talent for musical creation, and there are interesting details on all items. For other highlights choose "Shadrack" and "Mambo ...".

#### MILES DAVIS SEXTET

NYC. Jan. 30, 1953

Miles Davis (tp), Sonny Rollins, Charlie Parker (ts), Walter Bishop (p), Percy Heath (b), Philly Joe Jones (dm).

Three titles were recorded for Prestige (the reported "Well You Needn't" was never recorded):

450	Compulsion	Solo 64 bars (2 <sup>nd</sup> (ts)-solo). (F)
451-1	The Serpent's Tooth	Solo 64 bars (1 <sup>st</sup> (ts)-solo). (FM)
451-2	The Serpent's Tooth	As above plus solo 4 bars (2 <sup>nd</sup> solo). (FM)
452	'Round About Midnight	Soli 8 and 8 bars. (S)

The year 1952 has no SR recordings, thus he has had more than one year to practice before this Miles date. Probably it is not possible to draw any conclusions from the fact that he does not play remarkably or seem to have developed; the session is reported to have been a mess, and possibly it did not inspire SR very much. However, he plays beautifully in slow tempo on "... Midnight" and is quite successful on take 2 of "... Tooth". It is also interesting to note how similar SR and Bird play, showing clearly for all to hear that Bird was his main inspiration, in contrast to the many Lester Young disciples.

#### JAM SESSION

NYC. ca. 1953

Quote from Walter Bruyninckx: "Charlie Parker (as), Sonny Rollins, Lester Young (ts), rest unknown. Unknown titles. The above information based upon the fact that SR himself told Michel Delorme he has a tape of himself playing with Parker".

Pianist Bill Triglia told me some years ago that Sonny Rollins once teamed up with trumpet player Tony Fruscella, and in a late night session they put on Andre Kostelanetz' "Stardust" and played with it! The result was taped but has probably not survived.

#### SONNY ROLLINS WITH THE MODERN JAZZ QUARTET

Hackensack, NJ. Oct. 7, 1953

Sonny Rollins (ts), Milt Jackson (vib), John Lewis (p), Percy Heath (b), Kenny Clarke (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Prestige:

509	In A Sentimental Mood	Solo 32 bars. Solo 8 bars to long coda. (S)
510	The Stopper	Duet with (vib) 64 bars to solo 56 bars. Duet with (vib) 24 bars. (F)
511	Almost Like Being In Love	Soli 72, 4 and 12 bars. (FM)
512	No Moe	Straight. Solo 64 bars. Straight. (M)

Compared to the SR quartet session almost two years earlier, it is evident that the leader now has reached a new level by hard practice. He is much more sure of himself, tonally he is stronger with his earlier tendencies to read trouble disappearing and he plays with much greater authority. His choice of musical material is more advanced, like the difficult "The Stopper", a remarkable piece of rhythmic experimentation in a very high tempo. For another highlight, his version of "... Mood" must be one of the most beautiful in jazz history!!

#### THELONIOUS MONK

Hackensack, NJ. Nov. 13, 1953

Julius Watkins (frh), Sonny Rollins (ts), Thelonious Monk (p), Percy Heath (b), Willie Jones (dm).

Three titles were recorded for Prestige (no 78 rpm.):

531	Let's Call This	Solo 32 bars. (M)
532-1	Think Of One	Solo 32 bars. (M)
532-2	Think Of One	As above. (M)
533	Friday The 13th	Soli 80, 4, 4, 4, 4 and 8 bars. (M)

Although Monk's music is difficult, SR now seems confident and with better technique in double tempo than before. Still some "fine tuning" is needed, and his occasional reed troubles have not completely disappeared, but he definitely has emerged as one of the major innovators of modern tenorsax music. "Friday ...", having exquisite coplaying with Monk, is by far the most exciting item.

**ART FARMER NEW JAZZ STARS Hackensack, NJ. Jan. 20, 1954**

Art Farmer (tp), Sonny Rollins (ts), Horace Silver (p), Percy Heath (b), Kenny Clarke (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Prestige (no 78 rpm.), SR not present on 552 "Wisteria", but:

553	Soft Shoe	Part of intro. Solo 32 bars. (M)
554	Confab In Tempo	Solo 64 bars. (F)
555	I'll Take Romance	Solo 32 bars. (M)

The sound of this session is hard and more like 1951 than 1954, and SR seems to be dragged into a frantic post-bebop atmosphere, producing several fine soli, particularly on "Confab ...", but not having a chance to be his real own self with all his not-yet-liberated talents.

**MILES DAVIS QUINTET Hackensack, NJ. June 29, 1954**

Miles Davis (tp), Sonny Rollins (ts), Horace Silver (p), Percy Heath (b), Kenny Clarke (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Prestige (no 78 rpm.):

590	Aire gin	Solo 3 choruses of 36 bars. (FM)
591	Oleo	Solo 64 bars. (FM)
592-1	But Not For Me	Solo 64 bars. (FM)
592-2	But Not For Me	As above. (M)
593	Doxy	Solo 32 bars. (SM)

The best Miles Davis session till now with thanks to the admirable rhythm section. SR plays with strength and charisma on all items but lacks maybe the complete breakthrough, and none of his soli here are remarkable in the real sense.

**SONNY ROLLINS QUINTET Hackensack, NJ. Aug. 18, 1954**

Kenny Dorham (tp), Sonny Rollins (ts), Elmo Hope (p), Percy Heath (b), Art Blakey (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Prestige (no 78 rpm.):

606	Movin' Out	Soli 96 and 24 bars. (F)
607	Swingin' For Bumsy	Solo with ens 32 bars to solo 96 bars. Solo with ens 32 bars. (F)
608	Silk'n Satin	Intro to solo 32 bars. Solo 8 bars to coda. (S)
609	Solid	Solo 5 choruses of 12 bars. 24 bars 4/4 with (tp). (M)

Now we are getting closer to "the real thing", SR is in continuous development, and on this date he takes another step forward. Surrounded by excellent and not too complicated copatriots as some times earlier, I am referring to Monk and Miles, he seems to relax and play happily. He masters the up-tempi "... Out" and "... Benny" very well, blows a good medium blues on "Solid", and "... Satin" is one of his best ballad performances till now. A very fine session!

**SONNY ROLLINS QUARTET Hackensack, NJ. Oct. 25, 1954**

Sonny Rollins (ts), Thelonious Monk (p), Tommy Potter (b), Art Taylor (dm).

Three titles were recorded for Prestige (no 78 rpm.):

- |     |                          |  |
|-----|--------------------------|--|
| 630 | I Want To Be Happy       | Intro with (dm) to solo 6 choruses of 32 bars. Solo 2 choruses. (FM) |
| 631 | The Way You Look Tonight | Soli 2 and 1 ½ choruses of 68 bars. (M)                              |
| 632 | More Than You Know       | Solo 64 bars. Solo 32 bars to coda. (S)                              |

A session not without problems, again SR seems to be troubled by Monk's accompaniment, and the rhythm section seems quite hesitant at times. "... Happy" starts out promisingly but seems to run idle after a few choruses. "More Than ..." is a nice ballad but perhaps not too exciting. My favourite item is "... Tonight", almost a feature number for SR; Monk only takes the first 32 bars of the third of a total of four choruses, and after that he relaxes and gives everything he has got, sometimes almost duetting with himself. All SR's innovative elements are now ready for action, breaking loose to give him the status as one of the best if not **the** very best of jazz tenorsax artists of the late fifties.

SR went to Chicago in late 1954/early 1955. When the Brown/Roach quartet visited town, Harold Land decided to leave and go back to California. He was replaced by SR ca. Oct./Nov. 1955.

#### CLIFFORD BROWN / JAM SESSION

**Chi. Nov. 7, 1955**

Clifford Brown (tp), Sonny Rollins, Nicky Hill (ts), Billy Wallace (p), Chris Anderson (p-“Cherokee”), Leo Blevins (g), George Morrow (b), Max Roach (dm). Five titles amateur recorded live at the Bee Hive, issued as "Raw Genius":

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| I'll Remember April | Apr. 2 ½ choruses of 48 bars (NC)<br>(2 <sup>nd</sup> (ts)-solo). Chase with (tp/g/ts) 5 choruses to coda. (F) |
| Woody'n You (NC)    | No solo. (FM)  |
| Hot House (NC)      | Solo 3 ½ choruses of 32 bars to fade out. (M)  |
| Cherokee            | Solo 6 choruses of 64 bars.<br>2 choruses 16/16 with (tp/g) to<br>2 choruses 4/4 with (tp) to ens/coda. (F)    |
| Walkin'             | Solo 6 choruses of 12 bars (1 <sup>st</sup> (ts)-solo). (M)  |

Note: More fragments from this jam session reported to be issued on Philology (It) CDs, not available.

One year has passed since we heard SR last, his residence in Chicago did not earn him any studio recording sessions. So we meet him again with great expectations. However, this session is not the one to pass judgments, the sound quality is much too inferior, and as jam sessions go, there is a lack of structure and planning. "... April is much too fast and and amputated, "Cherokee" then is more interesting, showing great technique, if not that much music. He does not get much out of "Walkin'" nor "Hot House" (is it really SR on this one?). (Note that "... You" has a tenorsax solo 10 choruses of 32 bars by NH after a trumpet solo and before a guitar solo to fade out, thus SR seems to be edited out. NH also has a long, interesting solo on "Walkin'"). Therefore we should leave the Bee Hive jam session to Clifford Brown fans, who will find a lot of brilliant trumpet here, and pass on to much more interesting tenorsax sessions.

**same date?**

Personnel as above.

Two more titles, "A Night In Tunisia" and "Billie's Bounce", have appeared on CD, but no SR to be heard.

#### SONNY ROLLINS QUARTET

**Hackensack, NJ. Dec. 2, 1955**

Sonny Rollins (ts), Ray Bryant (p), George Morrow (b), Max Roach (dm).

Five titles were recorded for Prestige, issued as "Worktime":

- |     |  |  |
|-----|--|--|
| 826 | There's No Business Like Show Business | Solo 4 choruses of 48 bars. Solo 2 choruses to long free coda. (F) |
| 827 | Paradox                                | Solo 32 bars to break and solo 64 bars. 32 bars 4/4 with (dm)      |



		to solo 32 bars to coda. (M)
828	Raincheck	Solo 32 bars. Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. 2 choruses 8/8 with (dm) to solo 32 bars to coda. (FM)
829	There Are Such Things	Long free intro to solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. Solo 8 bars to very long coda. (S)
830	It's All Right With Me	Solo 3 choruses of 72 bars. 2 choruses 4/4 with (dm) to solo 72 bars to coda. (F)

The best SR session so far and the real start of the late fifties!! For the first time he is really allowed to utilize his enormous capabilities, and with a brilliant rhythm section he pours forth the most exciting tenorsax performances! Start with "... Show Business" and marvel at the ease with which he treats this unusual song in a high tempo. And he seems so free and happy and with full control in the medium swingers "Paradox" and "Raincheck". The most beautiful of ballads is also here in "... Things", dig this!! And finally an explosive "... With Me"; note as a detail how the chase has SR first in the first chorus, and then they change for the second chorus, smart! And what an out-chorus!! Note that the Prestige liner notes states that "... many of the oldest and most knowledgeable listeners by-pass consideration of his better-known work and continue to insist that this 1955 session is the best he ever made." Yes, at least, the warm atmosphere of this session is something special, and consider it among one of his most important ones!!!

**CLIFFORD BROWN / MAX ROACH QUINTET** **NYC. Jan. 4, 1956**  
Clifford Brown (tp), Sonny Rollins (ts), Richie Powell (p), George Morrow (b), Max Roach (dm).  
Three titles were recorded for Mercury/EmArcy:

12421-4	Gertrude's Bounce	Solo 32 bars. (F)
12422-10	Junior's Arrival (Step Lightly)	Solo 18 bars. (M)
12423-12	Powell's Prances	Solo 2 choruses of 24 bars. (F)

**NYC. Feb. 16&17, 1956**

Same. Six titles:

12459-1	I'll Remember April	With ens. Soli 16 and 96 bars. 8 bars 8/8 to 48 bars 4/4 with (tp). Solo 8 bars. (F)
12459-2	I'll Remember April (NC)	With ens. (F)
12459-3	I'll Remember April	As take 1 including 8/8 but then soli 8, 8, 8, 4 and 4 bars. (F)
12460-8	Time	Acc. (tp) 32 and 16 bars. (S)
12461-16	The Scene Is Clean	With ens. Solo 32 bars. (M)
12462-R	Flossie Lou	With ens. Solo 32 bars. (M)
12462-3	Flossie Lou	With ens. Soli 32 and 8 bars. (M)
12462-7	Flossie Lou (NC)	As above take R. (M)
12462-8	Flossie Lou	As above take R. (M)
12462-9	Flossie Lou	As above take R. (M)
12463-6	What Is This Thing Called Love?	Soli 8 and 64 bars. 32 bars 8/8 to 32 bars 4/4 with (tp). (F)
12463-7	What Is This Thing Called Love?	As above. (F)
12464-1	Love Is A Many Splendoured Thing (NC)	No solo.
12464-2	Love Is A Many Splendoured Thing (NC)	Solo 64 bars. (F)
12464-14	Love Is A Many Splendoured Thing	As above. (F)

Harold Land left the Brown/Roach quintet, and who would be the perfect replacement but Sonny Rollins, the most prominent tenorsax performer of the middle fifties, maybe? These recording sessions prove the choice was well made, and there is a lot of excellent soloing, particularly he seems to thrive in the upper tempo, and

the two versions of "... April" as well as "... Love?" and "Love ..." have exciting contributions, with effortless toying around with fascinating rhythmic phrasing of a kind nobody ever did before. I have the feeling he is a bit constrained, after all there is a gigantic trumpet player as well as a most self-conscious drummer, the leaders of the group, and the chances for SR to stretch out are not really that big. Nevertheless, these recordings are innovative, fresh and unquestionable jazz history, also because of SR's presence and work.

**CLIFFORD BROWN /  
MAX ROACH QUINTET**

**Buffalo, NY. Feb. 26, 1956**

Personnel as Jan. 4.

Broadcast from Town Casino, three titles:

Daahoud	Solo 64 bars. 32 and 32 bars 4/4 with (dm/tp). (FM)
'Round Midnight	Solo 32 bars. (S)
The Blues Walk	Solo 16 choruses of 12 bars. 2 choruses 4/4 with (tp) and announcer. (F)

"Bonus" session to the May, Cleveland CD and shorter items tailored for broadcast but of course excellent music; a swinging "Daahoud", a very beautiful and unique "... Midnight" and foremost for SR, a dynamic blues "... Walk", dig this one!

**CLIFFORD BROWN /  
MAX ROACH QUINTET**

**NYC. early 1956**

Personnel as Jan. 4.

Live, unknown details, four titles:

I'll Remember April	Chase 8/8 and 4/4 with (tp). (F)
More Than You Know	Solo 48 bars. (S)
Embraceable You	No solo, (tp) only. (S)
Wee Dot	8 choruses of 12 bars 4/4 with (tp). (FM)

**prob. NYC. early 1956**

Same personnel. Live, unknown details, three titles:

52 <sup>nd</sup> Street Theme	Solo. (F)
I'll See You In My Dreams	Solo 32 bars. Duet with (tp). (M)
These Foolish Things	No solo, (b) only. (S)

**NYC. 1956**

Same personnel. Rehearsal, taped by CB, two titles:

Perdido / Wahoo no. 1	Solo ca. 2 ½ choruses of 32 bars. 4/4 chase with (dm/tp/p). (M)
Perdido / Wahoo no. 2	Chase. (F)

**Unknown loc. 1956**

Personnel given on CD as 'possibly SR (ts)', but this is definitely wrong.

Titles: "Body And Soul" and "Perdido/Wahoo".

The programs above have so bad sound that they are almost unplayable (the first one is the best), and certainly not pleasant to listen to. Clifford's trumpet comes sometimes through, and also piano soli (note the long and very good one on "... April"!), but particular SR's tenorsax gets wooly and it is difficult to get the details. The most interesting SR items are the nice "... You Know" and a good chase after a long drum solo on "Wee Dot". The beautiful song "... My Dreams" is made into a joke. The "Perdido"s are so messy that structure often disappears. Some splicing must have been done with the tapes. Only no. 1 has something of interest. Therefore I have not cared to note bars exact as usually done.

**MILES DAVIS QUINTET**

**Hackensack, NJ. March 16, 1956**

Miles Davis (tp-open 866, -mute 864,865), Sonny Rollins (ts), Tommy Flanagan (p), Paul Chambers (b), Art Taylor (dm).

Three titles were recorded for Prestige:

864	In Your Own Sweet Way	Solo 40 bars. (SM)
865	No Line	Solo 10 choruses of 12 bars. (F)

866 Vierd Blues Solo 6 choruses of 12 bars. (SM)

SR meets Miles once more, almost two years since their last session. Only three titles were recorded, surprisingly, because the fellows are in fine shape with an excellent rhythm section, and in fact Tommy seems to be the star of the session with magnificent piano playing! "... Sweet Way", one of my favourite Miles items, is a pleasant swinging ballad performance with fine muted trumpet and tenorsax playing, while "No Line" seems to be a kind of warming-up (the first recorded in spite of matrix number?), but with good results, again with Miles on mute, and SR in his humorous mood. The highlight is however the relaxed "Vierd ..." with Miles on lovely open horn (a fluff in the beginning of the fourth chorus), a most remarkable performance for everybody concerned, and note SR's first "cool" chorus and how he gradually heats up!!

**SONNY ROLLINS PLUS FOUR Hackensack, NJ. March 22, 1956**  
Clifford Brown (tp), Sonny Rollins (ts), Richie Powell (p), George Morrow (b), Max Roach (dm).

Five titles were recorded for Prestige, issued as "3 Giants!":

867 I Feel A Song Comin' On Solo 56 bars. 56 bars 8/8 with (tp). Solo 8 bars. (F)  
868 Pent-Up House Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. 32 bars 2/2 with (dm/tp). (FM)  
869 Valse Hot Solo 5 choruses of 16 bars. (M)  
870 Kiss And Run Solo 2 choruses of 48 bars. 1 chorus 4/4 with (dm/tp) to 1 chorus 4/4 with (tp). (F)  
871 Count Your Blessings Soli 32 and 16 bars to coda. (SM)

Prestige also wants a part of the Brown/Roach success, making a session with fine variation in the music material. I am not particularly fond of the strained "I Feel ...", but otherwise there is much to be happy about here; a fascinating "Valse ...", a fast "Kiss ..." with an elegant chase with Clifford, a swinging "Pent-Up ...", and a beautiful "... Blessings", which however has an abrupt ending not sounding quite natural. In total, a fine SR session not at all inferior to the Emarcy ones.

**CLIFFORD BROWN / MAX ROACH QUINTET NYC. April 28, 1956**  
Personnel as Jan. 4.

Two titles were recorded at the "Basin Street" Club:

Valse Hot Solo 4 choruses of 16 bars. (M)  
I Feel A Song Coming On Solo 88 bars. (F)

**NYC. May 11, 1956**

Same as Jan. 4. Possibly Willie Jones (dm) replaces Roach. Broadcast from Basin Street. Date may possibly be May 6. Three titles, no SR on "What's New?" but:

Sweet Clifford Solo 64 bars. 64 bars 4/4 with (tp). (F)  
Daahoud Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (F)

Colourful soli here, with reasonable good sound, but too much extreme uptempo for my taste.

**CLIFFORD BROWN / MAX ROACH QUINTET possibly Chi. 1956**  
Personnel as Jan. 4. Live recordings from unknown club, five titles, issued as "Pure Genius", no SR on "What's New?" but:

I'll Remember April Solo 16 bars. Solo 5 choruses of 48 bars. 3 choruses 8/8 with (dm/tp). 2 choruses 4/4 with (dm). Soli 4 and 4 bars. (F)  
Daahoud Solo 5 choruses of 32 bars. 2 and 2 choruses of 4/4 with (tp/dm). (F)  
Lover Man Acc. (tp) 16 bars to solo 16 bars. (S)

52<sup>nd</sup> Street Theme

Solo 4 choruses of 32 bars. (F)

Again the preference for high tempo is highly prominent, and ok that may be, but when they go as fast as on “52<sup>nd</sup> Street ...”, music collapses into pure nonsense, even SR cannot take this. But of course, there is some interesting tenorsax (and trumpet) playing on this session also.

**SONNY ROLLINS QUARTET****Hackensack, NJ. May 24, 1956**

Sonny Rollins (ts), Red Garland (p), Paul Chambers (b), Philly Joe Jones (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Prestige, issued as “Tenor Madness”:

- |     |                                      |  |
|-----|--------------------------------------|--|
| 902 | My Reverie                           | Solo 2 choruses of 36 bars.<br>Solo 20 bars to coda. (SM)  |
| 903 | The Most Beautiful Girl In The World | Free intro.<br>Soli 72 and 40 bars.<br>Solo 64 bars to free coda. (F)                              |
| 904 | Paul’s Pal                           | Solo/straight 32 bars to solo<br>32 bars. Soli 8 and 4 bars.<br>Solo/straight 32 bars to coda. (M) |
| 905 | When Your Lover Has Gone             | Solo 64 bars. Solo 16 bars<br>to long coda. (SM)   |

SR with Davis’ and Coltrane’s rhythm section!! “... Pal” seems rather tame and disappointing, but on “... World” he is his usual dynamic self, note the outchorus! And there are two beautiful items in a pleasant slow medium tempo, “My ...” and “... Gone”, dig these!!

**same date**

Personnel as above with John Coltrane (ts) added. One title:

- |     |               |   |
|-----|---------------|---|
| 906 | Tenor Madness | Solo 8 choruses of 12 bars (2 <sup>nd</sup><br>(ts)-solo). 4 choruses<br>4/4 with (dm/ts). Solo 2 choruses<br>to 12 choruses 4/4 with (ts). (M) |
|-----|---------------|---|

... and SR also with Coltrane himself!!!! “Tenor ...” is nothing but a blues battle between two of the major performers of the era, many would say “the” two major giants!!!! Look at what I wrote in the JC section; this is a pleasant mainstream lunch break between two tenorsax giants, rather than the battle for life and death it might have been, particularly if it had taken place two years later when the two had matured to perfection. We don’t learn much more than we already know, they have different approaches to their jazz music, thank heaven for that!!

**CLIFFORD BROWN /  
MAX ROACH QUINTET****Cleveland, Ohio, May 28, 1956**

Personnel as Jan. 4.

Four titles were recorded at the Cotton Club:

- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Take The A Train             | Solo 7 choruses of 32 bars. (F)   |
| Damn That Dream              | Solo 48 bars to long coda. (S)  |
| Nice Work And You Can Get It | Solo 8 choruses of 32 bars (NC).<br>6 choruses 4/4 with (dm/tp) to<br>duet with (tp) 32 bars to coda. (F) |
| Jordu                        | Solo 4 choruses of 32 bars. 2 and<br>1 choruses of 4/4 with (dm/tp). (M)                                  |

**Cleveland, Ohio, May 29, 1956**

Same. Three titles:

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Valse Hot (NC)      | 3 choruses of 12 bars<br>2/2 with (dm/tp). (FM)                  |
| Get Happy           | Solo 18 choruses of 32 bars.<br>9 choruses 8/8 with (dm/tp). (F) |
| Untitled Blues (NC) | 10 choruses of 12 bars<br>4/4 with (dm/tp). (FM)                 |

**Cleveland, Ohio, June 1, 1956**

Same. Six titles, no SR on “What’s New?” but:

Delilah	Solo 4 choruses of 32 bars. 2 choruses 4/4 with (dm/tp). (FM)
Lover	Solo 4 choruses of 64 bars. (F)
Lover Man	Solo 16 bars. (S)
Daahoud	Solo 5 choruses of 32 bars. 2 and 2 choruses of 4/4 with (dm/tp). (F)
I'll Remember April	Solo 4 choruses of 48 bars. 3 choruses 8/8 with (dm/tp). 2 choruses 8/8 with (tp). (F)

The Cotton Club sessions are sensational and the best out-of-studio demonstrations of this legendary group! The sound quality is generally not at all bad and should not frighten anybody from enjoying the music of these giants. Of course not everything is perfect in a club setting, but the music is generalreally great. SR seems much more relaxed now compared to the earlier studio recordings. There are two slow items, "Lover ..." (some reed trouble) and Land's feature number "Dam ...", the latter having a one-note coda of fifteen seconds, kind of joke? But most is expectedly in uptempo, lots of chase, mostly with Max taking half and letting Brownie and Sonny share the other half. To go into solo details, how? It seems that SR takes "... Train" better than "Nice ..." and is messing up the start of "Lover", but he gives his personal and successful versions of the immortal vehicles "Daahoud", "Delilah" and "Jordu". And try the eighteen choruses on "Get Happy" with some exciting quotes!! Run and buy these CDs!!

**CLIFFORD BROWN / MAX ROACH          Norfolk, Virginia, June 18, 1956**

Clifford Brown (tp), Sonny Rollins (ts), Richie Powell (p), George Morrow (b), Max Roach (dm).

Eight titles were recorded at Continental Restaurant, five have SR:

Just One Of Those Things	Solo 4 choruses of 64 bars. 2 choruses 8/8 with (dm/tp). 3 choruses 8/8 with (tp). (F)
You Go To My Head	Solo 24 bars. (S)
Good Bait (NC)	Solo 5 choruses of 32 bars. (M)
Someone To Watch Over Me	Solo 48 bars to long coda. (S)
I Get A Kick Out Of You	Solo 6 choruses of 64 bars. 2 and 2 ½ choruses of 4/4 with (dm/tp). (F)

Another fine off-studio session, and there is not much to add; "... Things" and particularly "... Kick ..." are played extremely fast, too fast for listeners and possibly also for the musicians! SR has two beautiful ballad performances, "Someone ..." as a solo feature and "... Head" with a marvelous coda!

**SONNY ROLLINS QUARTET          Hackensack, NJ, June 22, 1956**

Sonny Rollins (ts), Tommy Flanagan (p), Doug Watkins (b), Max Roach (dm).

Five titles were recorded for Prestige, issued as "Saxophone Colossus":

918	You Don't Know What Love Is	Solo 2 ½ choruses of 32 bars. Solo 16 bars to long coda. (S)
919	St. Thomas	Straight 2 choruses to solo 5 choruses of 16 bars. Solo 4 choruses. Straight 2 choruses to coda. (FM)
920	Strode Rode	Solo 3 choruses of 40 bars. 96 bars 4/4 with (dm) to solo 40 bars to coda. (F)
921	Blue Seven	Solo 6 choruses of 12 bars. Solo 4 bars. Solo 5 choruses. 2 choruses 4/4 with (dm) to solo 3 choruses to coda. (M)
922	Moritat / Mack The Knife	Straight 1 chorus to solo 4 choruses of 32 bars. 48 bars 4/4 with (dm). Solo 32 bars to very long coda. (M)

Another one of the real great SR sessions! His choice of the calypsonian “St. Thomas” is well known far outside traditional jazz circles, an example of how he could take any music material he liked to turn into first rate jazz. This also goes for the fascinating “Moritat”, also not among the common jazz vehicles. But these two exciting items are only two out of five; we get a “Strode ...”, characterized in the liner notes as “the discipline with which SR can use his saxophone virtuosity, holding back his most complex phrases, more sustained lines, and dazzling runs until the climax of a solo, making them integral parts of a gradually developed musical structure”. And we have a wonderful “Blue ...”, so cool and yet warm, reminding of “Vierd Blues” with Miles, “a masterpiece” to quote Martin Williams. And “... Love Is” is one of SR’s very best recorded ballads ever, played so strongly and confidently, what can be better tenorsax playing than this!??

**MAX ROACH QUINTET****NYC. Sept. 17 & 19, 1956**

Kenny Dorham (tp), Sonny Rollins (ts), Ray Bryant (p), George Morrow (b), Max Roach (dm). Date also given as Oct. 12.

Seven titles were recorded for EmArcy (no tenorsax solo on 13767 “Doctor Free-Zee”) but:

13764	Ezzthetic	Solo 2 choruses of 64 bars. 64 bars 4/4 with (dm/tp). (F)
13765	The Most Beautiful Girl In The World	Solo 8 bars. Break to solo 36 bars. 16 bars 2/2 with (tp). (M)
13766	Woody’n You?	Soli 8, 64 and 4 bars. (FM)
13768	Mr. X	Break to solo 64 bars. Soli 4, 4 and 4 bars. (F)
13769	Body And Soul	Soli 16 and 8 bars to very long coda. (S)
13770	Just One Of Those Things	Solo 16 bars. Break to solo 2 choruses of 64 bars. Soli 8 and 8 bars. (F)

Quite good session mostly in uptempo, and there is a lot of dynamic tenorsax playing, most interesting is the very fast “... Things” with the first chorus a stop-time one. Fine ballad playing on “... Soul” but SR is not given complete choruses, rather frustrating this democratic solo space sharing, although the total is beautiful!

**SONNY ROLLINS QUINTET****Hackensack, NJ. Oct. 5, 1956**

Kenny Dorham (tp), Sonny Rollins (ts), Wade Legge (p), George Morrow (b), Max Roach (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Prestige, issued as “Rollins Plays for Bird”:

979	I’ve Grown Accustomed To Her Face	Soli 40 and 18 bars to long coda. (S)
980	Kids Now	Solo 7 choruses of 16 bars. Soli 4, 4 and 4 bars. (M)
981	The House I Live In	Free intro. Solo 4 choruses of 32 bars. 2 choruses 4/4 with (dm) to solo 36 bars to coda. (SM)
982	Bird Medley	Intro! (S)
	I Remember You	Solo 2 choruses of 36 bars to 16 bars 4/4 with (dm) to solo 20 bars. (M)
	My Melancholy Baby	No solo.
	Old Folks	No solo.
	They Can’t Take that Away From Me	Solo 2 choruses of 36 bars to 16 bars 4/4 with (dm) to solo 20 bars. (M)
	Just Friends	No solo.
	My Little Suede Shoes	No solo.
	Star Eyes	Solo 8 bars. Solo 2 choruses of 36 bars. 1 chorus 4/4 with (dm). Solo 16 bars. (M)

Good session but not quite as exciting as the magnificent “Worktime” and “Saxophone Colossus” ones. The “... Medley” starts out with a quote from Bird’s “Parker’s Mood”, but as a whole these 27 minutes of medley are a bit tame, as is “... Live In”. More exciting are the waltzing “Kids ...”, and in “... Accustomed ...” we get another of those magnificent ballads!

**MAX ROACH QUINTET****NYC. Oct. 10, 1956**

Personnel as EmArcy session above.

Broadcast from Café Bohemia, two titles:

Valse Hot (NC)	In ens. (M)
I Get A Kick Out Of You	Solo 16 bars. Solo 6 choruses of 64 bars. 3 choruses 8/8 with (dm/tp). Solo 16 bars. (F)

Another very interesting version of the very fast “... Kick ...”!

**SONNY ROLLINS QUARTET****Hackensack, NJ. Dec. 7, 1956**

Sonny Rollins (ts), Kenny Drew (p), George Morrow (b), Max Roach (dm), Earl Coleman (vo-1032,1034).

Six titles were recorded for Prestige, issued as “Sonny Boy”, two have not been available:

1031	B. Swift	Solo 2 choruses of 32 bars. 1 chorus 4/4 with (dm) to solo 3 choruses to 2 choruses 4/4 with (dm). Solo 1 ½ chorus to coda. (F)
1032	My Ideal	Intro 4 bars. Obbligato parts. Solo 16 bars. (S)
1033	Sonny Boy	Solo 6 choruses of 32 bars. 5 choruses 4/4 with (dm). Solo 32 bars to fade out. (F)
1034	Two Different Worlds	Obbligato parts. Solo 16 bars. (S)
1035	Ee-Ah	Solo 10 choruses of 12 bars. 9 choruses 2/2 with (dm) to solo 12 bars. Solo 3 choruses to long coda. (FM)
1036	B. Quick	Solo 4 choruses of 64 bars. 2 choruses 8/8 with (dm). 3 choruses 4/4 with (dm) to solo 3 choruses to long coda. (F)

Oh, yeah, this is some session!! Starting with a fast medium blues “Ee-Ah” and continuing with two extremely fast standards “B. ...” and “B. ...”, this is some of the most violent, masculine, ugly, hypnotic recordings SR ever made!! Here is not the intelligent, the humourous, the jestful SR, but the wild animal coming out. With “Sonny ...” almost the same quality, this an uptempo session never to forget!! And then, as a contrast, two beautiful ballads with Earl Coleman, magnificent playing!!

**SONNY ROLLINS QUINTET****Hackensack, NJ. Dec. 16, 1956**

Donald Byrd (tp), Sonny Rollins (ts), Wynton Kelly (p), Gene Ramey (b), Max Roach (dm).

Five titles were recorded for Blue Note:

tk1	Decision	Solo 4 choruses of 13 bars. (SM)
tk3	Plain Jane	Solo 8 bars. Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. 32 bars 4/4 to 32 bars 2/2 with (dm). Solo 4 bars. (M)
tk5	Sonnysphere	Intro 4 bars to ens 4 bars and solo 24 bars to 5 choruses of 32 bars. 2 choruses 4/4 to 4 choruses 2/2 with (dm). 8 bars 2/2 with (dm). (F)
tk6	How Are Things In Glocca Morra?	Soli 30 and 30 bars. (S)
tk8	Bluesnote	Soli 6 and 6 bars. Solo 6 choruses of 12 bars. 24 bars 4/4 with (tp). Soli 6 and 6 bars. (M)

Typical Blue Note session (note the effective rhythm section!), blowing no-nonsense, but nevertheless with interesting material. "Decision" is a typical example, a minor blues with one extra bar added! However, SR seems to have no problems with it. Fine blues playing is also found in the "normal" "Bluesnote". Note also the large amount of 4/4 and 2/2 (rare in this fast tempo!) choruses with Max on "Plain ..." at "Sonny'sphere", it is quite evident from this and many other sessions that SR loved to do just these kind of drum chases. The latter also has some particularly strong solo to be noted. And the lovely ballad of "... Glocca ..." is a must!! A fine SR standing up well in comparison with his contemporaries from this extremely creative period!!

**THELONIOUS MONK QUINTET****NYC. Dec. 17, 1956**

Clark Terry (tp), Sonny Rollins (ts), Thelonious Monk (p), Paul Chambers (b), Max Roach (dm, tymp). Date also given as Dec. 7.

One title was recorded for Riverside:

Bemsha Swing

Soli 64 and 30 bars. (M)

This is Monk's music, and everybody else play his music, not their own. Fascinating item but from a SR-tenorsax point of view, there are more interesting things.

**THELONIOUS MONK QUINTET****NYC. Dec. 23, 1956**

Ernie Henry (as), Sonny Rollins (ts), Thelonious Monk (p, cel), Oscar Pettiford (b), Max Roach (dm). Date also given as Oct. 9.

Three titles were recorded for Riverside:

Pannonica

Solo 34 bars. (S)

Pannonica alt. (NC)

Solo 2 bars (NC). (S)

Brilliant Corners

Solo 22 bars (SM) to 24 bars. (F)

Ba-Lu Bolivar Ba-Lues-Are

Solo 6 choruses of 12 bars. (SM)

Another Monk session similar to the one above, evoking the same feelings, particularly with regard to "... Corners". Nevertheless SR plays good soli here, particularly the slow "Pannonica" should be noted.

**SONNY ROLLINS TRIO****LA. March 7, 1957**

Sonny Rollins (ts), Ray Brown (b), Shelly Manne (dm).

Six titles were recorded for Contemporary, issued as "Way Out West":

Solitude

Duet with (b) 32, 32 and 32 bars to very, very long coda. (S)

Wagon Wheels

Straight 40 bars to solo 132 bars. Straight 36 bars to very long coda. (SM)

Way Out West

Straight 2 to solo 3 choruses of 20 bars. 2 choruses (ts/b/dm) to straight 2 choruses to coda. (M)

Way Out West (alt.)

As above except 3 choruses (ts/b/dm) to straight 32 bars to coda. (M)

There Is No Greater Love

Solo 64 and 16 bars to very long coda. (S)

I'm An Old Cowhand

Straight 1 chorus to solo 2 choruses of 18 bars. Solo/straight 1 chorus and 8 bars to fade out. (M)

I'm An Old Cowhand (alt.)

As above but solo ca. 6 1/2 choruses! (M)

Come, Gone

Soli 252 and 76 bars (FM) to coda. (S)

Come Gone (alt.)

Soli 370 and 36 bars (FM) to coda. (S)

This is a very, very important sessions for SR and also for myself; "Way Out West" was my first SR record, and it immediately made an unforgettable impression on the teenager. However, more important are other facts; it contains the most unusual and exciting material for improvisation, it is the first session with pianoless trio which later should become his preferred format, and finally: He never played better, nor with more inspiration and inventiveness than on this session, and with a godsent accompaniment!!! His interpretation of "Solitude" is brilliant, and also "... Greater Love" is a true masterpiece. But even more important, he treats those cowboy tunes as if they were made by the great songwriters of the thirties. The cooperation within the trio is unique, so sensitive, and to mention "Solitude" again, the whole thing is



noted as a duet with Ray Brown rather than a “pure solo” as such, play it to know why! Even alternate takes we get, very interesting, and note that the length of the alternate “... Cowhand” is almost doubled to ten minutes, as SR’s inspiration is inexhaustible. Sometimes, as in “Come Gone”, I must admit to not quite follow the path he is going with regard to his improvisations and number of choruses; I suspect him to skip a few bars here and there! Probably my fault, try yourself. The fact is that this is one very strong candidate for “SR’s best session ever”!!

**MAX ROACH QUINTET****LA. March 18-21, 1957**

Kenny Dorham (tp), Sonny Rollins (ts), Bill Wallace (p), George Morrow (b), Max Roach (dm). Recording place erroneously given as NYC..

Eight titles were recorded for EmArcy, issued as "Jazz In 3/4 Time":

I'll Take Romance	Soli 8 and 32 bars. (M)
It Don't Mean A Thing	Solo 8 bars. Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. Soli 4 and 4 bars. (F)
Blues Waltz	Solo 3 choruses of 12 bars. (M)
Love Letters	Solo 16 bars. (S). Solo 64 bars. (M). Duet with (tp) 16 bars to coda. (S)
Little Folks	Solo 64 bars. (M)
Minor Trouble	Soli 64, 4, 4, 4 and 4 bars. (FM)
Valse Hot	Solo 5 choruses of 32 bars. 2 choruses 4/4 with (dm/tp). (M)
Lover	Straight/duet with (tp) 64 bars to solo 64 bars. 32 bars 4/4 with (tp) to duet/ens 16 bars to coda. (FM)

Not everything is waltzing on this exciting session, but those are the most fascinating. Nothing is wrong with the violent uptempo on “... Thing”, his beautiful, very slow introduction to and the swinging continuation of “Love ...”, and the hard “... Trouble”, not at all! But SR’s experiments with ¾ and 6/8 structures produce amazing results in the five remaining titles, and if there still exist people who believe waltzes cannot swing, they are hopelessly outdated. “Blues ...” and “... Folks” are particularly interesting, but the main highlight is “Valse Hot”, dig this!!

**SONNY ROLLINS QUINTET****NYC. April 14, 1957**

J. J. Johnson (tb), Sonny Rollins (ts), Horace Silver (p-except “Reflections”), Thelonious Monk (p-“Reflections”, “Misterioso”), Paul Chambers (b), Art Blakey (dm).

Six titles were recorded for Blue Note:

tk1	Why Don't I	Solo 2 choruses of 28 bars. 2 choruses 4/4 with (dm/tp). (FM)
tk4	Wail March	Soli 4 and 4 bars to 8 choruses of 16 bars. (F)
tk6	Reflections	Duet with (p) 32 bars. Solo 32 bars. Solo 8 bars to coda. (S)
tk7	Poor Butterfly	Soli 8 and 16 bars. Duet with (tb) 16 bars to coda. (S)
tk11	You Stepped Out Of A Dream	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. 32 bars 4/4 with (dm/tp) to 32 bars 4/4 with (tb). (F)
tk12	Misterioso	Solo 3 choruses of 12 bars. Soli 4 and 4 bars. (S)

Another Blue Note session with a quite different personnel but also with high quality. I am most fascinated by the fast “... March”, dig this!! Also “... Dream” and “Why ...” have some excellent tenorsax playing. In the slow tempo “Misterioso” is something special featuring both Monk and Silver as piano soloists, but with regard to SR, his strong solo on “Reflections” is much more interesting. And the romantic “... Butterfly”, played mostly straight, goes straight to your heart!

**KENNY DORHAM SEXTET****NYC. May 21, 1957**

Kenny Dorham (tp), Sonny Rollins (ts), Hank Jones (p), Oscar Pettiford (b), Max Roach (dm), Beth Glammann (harp-“... Flame”)

Four titles were recorded for Riverside, issued as “Jazz Contrasts”:

My Old Flame	Acc. (tp). Solo 16 bars. (S)
La Villa	Solo 16 bars. Solo 2 choruses of 64 bars. Soli 8, 8, 8 and 8 bars. (F)
Falling In Love With Love	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (M)
I'll Remember April	Duet with (tp) 1 chorus of 48 bars. Solo 4 choruses. 3 choruses 8/8 with (dm/tp). 2 choruses 8/8 with (tp). Duet 1 chorus to long ens coda. (F)

This is Dorham's session, but SR gets ample opportunities. He takes a nice slow solo on "... Flame" and swings merrily on "Falling ...". However, he impresses most in fast tempo here; "La Villa" and "... April" are fireworks of tenorsax (and trumpet) playing!

#### SONNY ROLLINS QUARTET

NYC. June 11&12, 1957

Sonny Rollins (ts), Sonny Clark (p), Percy Heath (b), Roy Haynes (dm), except for "It Could Happen To You" which is an unaccompanied tenorsax solo.

Seven titles were recorded for Riverside:

Dearly Beloved	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars to 4 bars and coda. (M)
Every Time We Say Goodbye	Soli 64 and 8 bars. Solo 16 bars to straight 16 bars to coda. (FM)
It Could Happen To You	Solo 64 bars. (S)
Just In Time	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. 32 bars 4/4 with (dm) to solo/straight 36 bars to long coda. (FM)
Toot-Toot-Tootsie	Solo 3 choruses of 40 bars. 1 chorus 4/4 with (dm) to solo 48 bars to coda. (FM)
Mangoes	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. Solo 2 choruses. (M)
Cutie	Solo 3 choruses of 28 bars. Solo 2 choruses to coda. (M)

Possibly not as well known as many other famous SR sessions, this one has a lot of excellent tenorsax playing. There is something of interest in every tune, and I will not go into details except on one item. The unaccompanied and slow "It Could ..." is a real masterpiece and a daring adventure only the preceding giant Coleman Hawkins ever tried before, an evidence of the courage and creativity of SR.

#### SONNY ROLLINS QUARTET / TRIO

NYC. June 19, 1957

Sonny Rollins (ts), Sonny Clark (p-"What Is There To Say"), Paul Chambers (b), Roy Haynes (dm).

Three titles were recorded for Riverside, issued as "Sonny's Time":

What Is There To Say?	Soli 32 and 32 bars to long coda. (S)
The Last Time I Saw Paris	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars to long coda. (M)
Funky Hotel Blues	Solo 6 choruses of 12 bars. 4 choruses 4/4 with (p) to solo 2 choruses to coda. (M)

The lovely ballad "... To Say?", played with great strength, is the session highlight! On the two other titles SR continues to experiment with the trio format. Note the exciting second stoptime chorus on "... Paris", as well as the funky blues choruses on "Funky ...", groovy, yeah!

#### MILES DAVIS QUINTET

NYC. July 13, 1957

Miles Davis (tp), Sonny Rollins (ts), Red Garland (p), Paul Chambers (b), Art Taylor (dm).

Four titles recorded at the Cafe Bohemia, two have SR:

Four (Squared)	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (F)
----------------	---------------------------------

Bye Bye Blackbird Solo 36 bars (NC). (M)

Particularly the laidback version of "... Blackbird" is interesting, too bad the solo is faded out. "Four" also has some good tenorsax playing without being particularly noteworthy.

**MILES DAVIS QUINTET NYC. July 20, 1957**

Personnel as above.

AFRS Bandstand USA no. 1 from Café Bohemia, two titles:

Dear Old Stockholm Solo 86 bars. (FM)

Bag's Groove Solo 2 choruses of 12 bars,  
last with announcer. (M)

**NYC. July 27, 1957**

Same. AFRS Bandstand USA no. 2 from Café Bohemia, two titles:

Bye, Bye Blackbird Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (M)

Tune Up Solo 80 bars. (F)

Not the very best sound, and there is a lot of talking spoiling the music here, but there is some good SR, particularly "... Blackbird" is very interesting.

**SONNY ROLLINS QUARTET NYC. Sept. 22, 1957**

Sonny Rollins (ts), Wynton Kelly (p), Doug Watkins (b), Philly Joe Jones (dm), but (p) and (b) out on "The Surrey ...".

Six titles were recorded for Blue Note, issued as "Newk's Time":

tk5	Tune Up	Solo 4 choruses of 32 bars to 24 bars. Solo 8 bars. 32 bars 4/4 with (dm). Solo 2 choruses to coda. (F)
tk9	Asiatic Raes	Solo 4 choruses of 32 bars. Solo/ straight 1 chorus to coda. (FM)
tk13	The Surrey With The Fringe On Top	Solo 5 choruses of 40 bars to 72 bars 4/4 and 36 bars 2/2 with (dm). Solo/straight 48 bars to fade out. (FM)
tk15	Wonderful! Wonderful!	Solo 4 choruses of 40 bars. 2 choruses 4/4 with (dm) to solo 1 chorus (F) to long coda. (S)
tk17	Namely You	Solo 32 bars. Solo 16 bars to 32 bars with (dm) to coda. (SM)
tk19	Blues For Philly Joe	Straight 4 to solo 7 choruses of 12 bars. 4 choruses 4/4 with (dm) to solo/straight 2 choruses to coda. (FM)

This session has been suggested to be SR's best ever, and even if there are second opinions and other choices, the suggestion makes good sense, this is a brilliant session!!! There is time for a pleasant ballad in "Namely ...", but otherwise this is masculine force and high tempo, a study in applied energy for artistic purposes. Whether the fast "Tune ..." or "Wonderful ...", or the groovy blues on "Blues ...", or some oriental swing on "... Raes", SR plays with his full toolbox supplied with rhythmic elegance. Some may choose the the tenorsax -drums duet on "The Surrey ..." as the session highlight, why not?! The sound is gorgeous, this is something the Riverside sessions never achieved! Anyway, this is one of the most important tenorsax sessions of the late fifties, not only in a SR perspective. Go ahead!!!

**ABBEY LINCOLN VOCAL ACC. BY NYC. Oct. 28, 1957**

Kenny Dorham (tp), Sonny Rollins (ts), Wynton Kelly (p), Paul Chambers (b), Max Roach (dm).

Eight titles were recorded for Riverside (an additional title "Tender As A Rose" as unaccompanied vocal), issued as "That's Him":

Strong Man Intro 4 bars. Solo 20 bars.  
Coda with (tp). (S)

Happiness Is A Thing Called Joe Solo 32 bars (SM) to  
obbligato parts. (S)

That's Him Obbligato parts. (S)

I Must Have That Man	Solo 64 bars. (F)
I Must Have That Man (alt.)	As above. (F)
My Man	Obbligato parts. (S)
Porgy	Obbligato parts. (S)
Porgy (alt.)	As above. (S)
When A Woman Loves A Man	Solo 4 bars. Obbligato parts. (S)
Don't Explain	Solo 16 bars. (S)

This is of course a quite different SR session with Abbey firmly in charge of a very Billie Holiday related session. SR (and Dorham) mostly plays in the background, but there are some pleasant soli on "Strong ...", "Happiness ..." and particularly "... Explain", plus two surprisingly fast versions of Billie's famous "... That Man".

### SONNY ROLLINS TRIO

NYC. Nov. 3, 1957

Sonny Rollins (ts), Donald Bailey (b), Pete La Roca (dm).

Five titles were recorded in the afternoon for Blue Note at Village Vanguard, two issued:

tk2	Night In Tunisia	Straight 52 bars to break 4 bars and solo 4 choruses of 32 bars to straight 16 bars. Straight 8 bars. Straight/solo 64 bars to long coda. (F)
tk3	I've Got You Under My Skin	Solo 5 choruses of 56 bars to 2 choruses 8/8 with (dm) to solo 32 bars. Solo 3 choruses to coda. (F)

same date

Sonny Rollins (ts), Wilbur Ware (b), Elvin Jones (dm).

Fifteen titles were recorded in the evening, fourteen issued:

t6	Night in Tunisia	As above but straight/solo 40 bars to very long coda. (M)
tk7	Softly, As In A Morning Sunrise	Soli 32 and 64 bars. 64 bars 4/4 with (dm) to coda with (b). (M)
tk8	Four	Solo 8 choruses of 32 bars to 6 choruses 4/4 with (dm) to solo 32 bars to long coda. (FM)
tk9	Woody'n You	Straight intro 8 bars and 1 chorus of 32 bars to solo 6 choruses to 2 choruses 4/4 with (dm). Solo/straight 2 choruses to long coda. (FM)
tk10	That Old Devil Moon	Solo 5 choruses of 40 bars to 2 choruses 4/4 with (dm) to solo/straight 3 choruses to coda. (M)
tk11	What Is This Thing Called Love?	Solo 13 choruses of 32 bars to 3 choruses 4/4 with (dm) Solo 2 choruses to long coda. (F)
tk12	Softly, As In A Morning Sunrise	Straight 32 bars to solo 64 bars. 32 and 16 bars 4/4 with (dm) to Straight 32 bars and long coda. (M)
tk13	Sonny moon For Two	Straight 2 choruses of 12 bars to solo 17 choruses to 2 choruses 4/4 with (b) to 6 choruses 4/4 with (dm) to straight 2 choruses to coda. (M)
tk14	I Can't Get Started	Solo 64 bars to very long coda. (S)
tk15	I'll Remember April	Solo 6 choruses of 48 bars. 2 choruses 4/4 with (dm) to 3 choruses duet with (dm) to long coda. (F)
tk16	Get Happy	Solo 10 choruses of 32 bars, partly duet with (b). Acc. (dm) to solo 2 choruses to coda. (F)

tk17	Striver's Row	Solo 4 choruses of 32 bars to 1 chorus 8/8 with (dm) to solo 2 choruses. Coda. (FM)
tk18	All The Things You Are	Solo 3 choruses of 36 bars. 56 bars 4/4 with (dm) to solo 16 bars to coda. (M)
tk19	Get Happy	Solo 4 choruses of 32 bars to 2 choruses 4/4 with (dm) to solo 32 bars to long coda. (FM)

These two hours tenorsax/bass/drums fireworks have no parallel in earlier jazz history, and therefore it is a great challenge to describe it, which I give up doing in detail. SR is in his prime, with the very best of bass and drums making this occasion more a collective effort than tenorsax "with rhythm". There is one lovely ballad in "... Started", but otherwise this is an exhibition of upper tempi. Being a kind of conclusion to the piano-less experiments started half-a-year earlier, it is easy to understand that the piano has no place in this new world of rhythmic freedom. SR's main tool is his rhythmic flexibility and playground, but when he wants to he can take the fastest runs like any of his contemporaries. To go into details would be, as I said, a hopeless task, but note a few things; as how different are his two versions of "... Tunisia", "... Sunrise" and "... Happy", the former even having a formidable tempo difference. Not that it is better than the rest, but my guess is that most of us would pick "Sonnymoon...", a swinging blues, as one highlight. But in fact, there is one continuous two-hours-highlight!!!

#### SONNY ROLLINS QUINTET

NYC. Nov. 4, 1957

Jimmy Cleveland (tb), Sonny Rollins (ts), Gil Coggins (p), Wendell Marshall (b), Kenny Dennis (dm).

Three titles were recorded for Period:

Sonnymoon For Two	Soli 2 and 6 choruses of 12 bars. (SM)
Like Someone In Love	With ens 32 bars to break and solo 32 bars. Soli 16 and 4 bars. (M)
Theme From "Pathetique Symphony"	With ens 32 bars to solo 32 bars. Solo with ens 8 bars to long coda. (S)

A "forgotten" session with a rather conventional rhythm section but with nice music; a slower than usual "Sonnymoon...", a swinging "... Love", and a beautiful "Theme ..." as the highlight.

#### DIZZY GILLESPIE

NYC. Dec. 11, 1957

Dizzy Gillespie (tp), Sonny Rollins (ts), Ray Bryant (p), Tommy Bryant (b), Charlie Persip (dm).

Two titles were recorded for Verve:

21845-2	Wheatleigh Hall	Solo 18 choruses of 12 bars. 4 choruses 4/4 with (tp). (F)
21846	Sumphin'	Solo 5 choruses of 12 bars. (S)

Two brilliant and extreme versions of the blues!! First "... Hall" in a forceful fast tempo with a most swinging rhythm section, Dizzy on the summit of his artistic life, and with SR really going for it with all his might. And the surging, groovy "Sumphin'", firmly based on Bryant's sparkling piano with SR taking five brilliant choruses. A lovely session and a welcomed change from all the trio/quartet sessions, as if they were not good enough!

#### DIZZY GILLESPIE / SONNY ROLLINS

NYC. Dec. 19, 1957

Dizzy Gillespie (tp, vo), Sonny Rollins, Sonny Stitt (ts), Ray Bryant (p), Tommy Bryant (b), Charlie Persip (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Verve:

21857	The Eternal Triangle	Solo 5 choruses of 32 bars. 3 choruses 4/4 and 3 choruses 8/8 with SS. (F)
21857-A	On the Sunny Side Of The Street	Solo 32 bars. (SM)
21857-B	After Hours	Solo 3 choruses of 12 bars. (S)

21857-C I Know That You Know Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars.  
Solo 32 bars. (F)

This and the previous session are in fact unique inasmuch as they present SR in a JATP environment, albeit in studio only. To have Stitt added does not make the session less interesting either! They fight well together in the good old tenorsax battle tradition on "... Triangle", a great vehicle, and the session highlight in general! "... Street" is perhaps not that exciting, but there is some great blues on "... Hours". And SR is brilliant on the fast "... Know", taking all three choruses as stop-time, magnificent!!

**SONNY ROLLINS TRIO** **NYC. Feb. 11, 1958**

Sonny Rollins (ts), Oscar Pettiford (b), Max Roach (dm).

Date also given as Feb. 27.

Four titles were recorded for Riverside:

	Someday I'll Find You	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. 2 choruses 1/1 with (dm). Solo 1 chorus to coda. (FM)
	Will You Still Be Mine?	Solo 2 choruses of 56 bars. Solo 12 bars. (F) to coda. (S)
	Shadow Waltz	Solo 64 bars. 36 bars 4/4 with (b). Solo 40 bars to coda. (M)
tk3	Till There Was You	As below. (SM)
tk4	Till There Was You	Soli 64 and 16 bars to coda. (SM)

Another trio session, this time with one of modern jazz' most prominent bass players. Four very interesting items of which I choose the two beautiful "Till There ..." as the highlights.

**NYC. Feb. 11 & March 7, 1958**

Same. One title, issued as "The Freedom Suite":

	The Freedom Suite	19:17 – Soli and cowork (b/dm), (3/4 and 4/4) (S/SM/M/FM/F)
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The famous "Freedom Suite", revisited almost fifty years later. Did the American blacks get their freedom? Yes, and no, this discussion does not necessarily belong here, and I am not particularly competent either. My question is: How does the "Freedom Suite" sound today? My answer: It sounds certainly like a suite, a coherent piece of composition, not like the ordinary song to be improvised on, but with a wholeness rarely achieved. There are no strict sections but a continuous and integrated piece of art (but: if it was recorded on two different dates, even months apart, how can it be continuous??). Duke and Mingus never did better than this. On the other hand, being far way in time, we may not be so interested in the political and social aspects of this event and tend to treat it as a jazz playing session. Possibly therefore many of us today may prefer one of SR's many "normal" sessions, where he shows his extraordinary improvisational capabilities and "freedom" in the best artistic sense! Play the "Freedom Suite", close your eyes, and take five minutes afterwards to analyze your emotions!!

Note of Oct. 2020: There are working versions of two of the sections in "The Freedom Suite". "Selection 1, Third Movement" is the one you find starting at 7:57 and 15:15 of the issued versions, These are called take 4 and take 5 respectively. However, take 1, 2 and 3 also exist. Then what is called "Selection 2" starting at 16:22. This is called take 3. However take 1-2 and 4-8 also exist, from false starts to complete versions. Further details seem not necessary here.

**SONNY ROLLINS** **Newport, RI., July 7, 1958**

Sonny Rollins (ts), Henry Grimes (b), Roy Haynes (dm).

Two titles were recorded at the Newport Jazz Festival:

	Mack The Knife	Solo 7 choruses of 32 bars to 3 choruses 4/4 with (dm) to solo 32 bars to very long coda. (FM)
	I Want To Be Happy	Intro 4 bars to solo 10 choruses of 32 bars to 6 choruses 4/4 with (dm) (F) to coda. (S)

Energetic, inspired and fascinating tenorsax playing on this very fast version of "... Happy". Postscript of July 5, 2016. "Mack ..." has appeared, and also this is a great item!!

**SONNY ROLLINS TRIO****NYC. July 10, 1958**

Sonny Rollins (ts), Henry Grimes (b), Charlie Wright (dm). SR is unaccompanied on "Body And Soul".

Four titles recorded for Metrojazz:

What's My Name?	Intro 8 bars to solo 64 bars. Solo 36 bars to coda. (M)
If You Were The Only Girl ITW	Solo 4 choruses of 40 bars to 3 choruses 4/4 with (dm) to solo 40 bars to coda. (F)
Manhattan	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars to long coda. (SM)
Body And Soul	Intro 4 bars to solo 64 bars to very long coda. (S)

Fine session with a variation of music material, although it lacks the undefinable inspiration of the very best sessions earlier. A groovy "... Name?" and a fast "... World" are well noticing, but the two slow numbers are what will be remembered from this session. Don't forget "Manhattan" after having the pleasure of listening to SR's unaccompanied solo on "... Soul" which represents quite a challenge to Hawkins!

**SONNY ROLLINS  
AND THE BIG BRASS****NYC. July 11, 1958**

Nat Adderley (cnt), Clark Terry, Reunald Jones, Ernie Royal (tp), Billy Byers, Jimmy Cleveland, Frank Rehak (tb), Don Butterfield (tu), Sonny Rollins (ts), Dick Katz (p), Rene Thomas (g), Henry Grimes (b), Roy Haynes (dm), Ernie Wilkins (arr, dir).

Four titles were recorded for Metrojazz:.

Grand Street	Straight with orch 32 bars to break and solo 80 bars. Straight/ solo 32 bars to coda. (M)
Grand Street (NC) (alt.)	Straight/solo 32 bars to coda. (M)
Grand Street (NC) (alt.)	As (NC) above. (M)
Far Out East	Solo 32 bars. Break to solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. Solo 4 bars to long coda. (FM)
Who Cares?	With orch. Break to solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. Solo with orch 2 choruses to coda. (F)
Love Is A Simple Thing	Straight/solo 3 choruses of 18 bars. Straight to long coda. (F)

SR being a typical loner these days, preferring the trio format, seems to be somewhat distanced from the big brass around him. On "... East" he also is a bit out of tune. I have a feeling he did not like this idea much, contrary to his conception of freedom, and the session does not belong to his important ones.

**MODERN JAZZ QUARTET  
+ SONNY ROLLINS****Lenox, Mass. Aug. 3, 1958**

Sonny Rollins (ts), Milt Jackson (vib), John Lewis (p), Percy Heath (b), Connie Kay (dm).

Two titles were recorded for Atlantic at concert in Music Inn:

Bag's Groove	Solo 10 choruses of 12 bars. (M)
Night In Tunisia	Break to solo 64 bars. Duet with (vib) to coda. (M)

Nice encounter, but SR does not quite integrate with this famous quartet, and his soloing is competent but not remarkable, he should have been able to get much more out of these exciting titles.

**SONNY ROLLINS TRIO / QUARTET****same date**

Sonny Rollins (ts), John Lewis (p-“Doxy”, “You Are ...”), Percy Heath (b), Connie Kay (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Metrojazz:

Doxy	Straight 2 choruses of 16 bars to solo 9 choruses. Straight 24 bars to coda. (M)
Limehouse Blues	Solo 11 choruses of 32 bars to 64 bars 4/4 with (dm) to solo 64 bars to coda. (F)
I’ll Follow My Secret Heart	Solo 64 bars to 64 bars 4/4 with (b/dm) to solo 16 bars to very long coda. (M)
You Are Too Beautiful	Solo 80 bars to very long coda. (S)

Strange to say it, but with Milt’s vibraphone out, this date improves! Still SR is used to more exciting backing than Kay’s, and therefore “Limehouse ...” is not the thing it might have been. “Doxy”, a kind of 16 bars blues, and “... Heart” are quite nice, although the chase on the latter is rather pale. The ballad “... Beautiful” is the highlight, although it lacks the consistency of his best works.

No, I wasn’t there when SR played with his trio at Village Vanguard! But I was there when he played at Birdland!!! One of the three nights in August 1958 of my dishwashing adventure at “Oslofjord” brought me and my friend to this famous place. I remember when we walked down the steep stairs, SR was taking “After You’ve Gone” in uptempo. Then we were welcomed in by “Pee Wee” Marquette, on a very modest low budget. Who played bass and drums I don’t remember, but the evening made a great and lasting impression on me. Yet, I didn’t know then that we had been in the middle of jazz history!!!

**SONNY ROLLINS AND  
THE CONTEMPORARY LEADERS**

**LA. Oct. 20&22, 1958**

Sonny Rollins (ts), Hampton Hawes (p), Barney Kessel (g), Leroy Vinnegar (b), Shelly Manne (dm), Vic Feldman (vib-“You”).

Eight titles were recorded for Contemporary:

I’ve Told Ev’ry Little Star	Straight 1 to solo 2 choruses of 32 bars. Solo 1 to straight 1 chorus to long coda. (FM)
Rock-A-Bye YBWADM	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. Solo 48 bars to coda. (M)
How High The Moon	Duet with (g) and/or (b) 6 choruses of 32 bars. Solo 2 choruses to long coda. (M)
You	Soli 64, 64, 16 and 8 bars. Duet with (vib) 32 bars. Solo 16 bars to coda. (F)
You (alt.)	As above. (F)
I’ve Found A New Baby	Intro 4 bars to solo 5 choruses of 32 bars. (M)
I’ve Found A New Baby (alt.)	As above but solo 6 choruses. (M)
Alone Together	Solo 44 bars. Duet with (g) 44 bars to coda. (M)
In The Chapel In The Moonlight	Soli 64 and 16 bars to coda. (S)
The Song Is You	Solo 3 choruses of 64 bars. 3 choruses 8/8 with (dm) to solo 64 bars. (F) to coda. (S)
The Song Is You (alt.)	Solo 5 choruses of 64 bars. 2 choruses 8/8 with (dm) to solo 64 bars. (F) to coda. (S)

I am a bit ambivalent to this session. It has an excellent mainstream rhythm section, but maybe not exactly of the kind SR prefers. His playing seems somewhat detached and not of the usual inspiration. However, this does not mean the session is without qualities. The slow “... Moonlight” is very nice, and the two Basie-Prez inspired



items “Rock- ...” and “... New Baby” are very interesting. And the alternates are quite different, SR never repeats himself!

**SONNY ROLLINS****Chi. 1959**

Sonny Rollins (ts), Bob Cranshaw (b), Walter Perkins (dm).

Three titles were recorded at the Playboy Jazz Festival:

Without A Song	Straight 1 to solo 3 choruses of 56 bars to very long free coda. (M)
Oleo	Straight 1 to solo 3 choruses of 32 bars to 3 choruses 4/4 with (b/dm) to straight 1 chorus to coda. (F)
Playboy After Dark (NC)	Straight 12 bars to solo 24+8 bars (NC), last 20 destroyed by announcer. (FM)

Strong and fast playing on “Oleo”, pleasant and laidback on “... Song”, and very promising blues on “... Dark” which unfortunately is cut short.

**SONNY ROLLINS TRIO****San Remo, Italy, Feb. 22/23, 1959**

Personnel as below.

One title was recorded live by Mario Nicola Misino at the San Remo International Festival:

It Don't Mean A Thing	Solo 6 choruses of 32 bars to 64 bars 4/4 with (dm) to acc. (b) to solo 40 bars to coda. (F)
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Postscript of Nov. 9, 2020: Gorgeous five minutes of high tempo and whitehot tenorsax playing by SR, never heard anything like it!! Thank you Mario for recording and preserving this jazz archeological gem!!

**SONNY ROLLINS TRIO****Stockholm, March 2, 1959**

Sonny Rollins (ts), Henry Grimes (b), Pete La Roca (dm).

One title was recorded live at “Nalen”:

St. Thomas	Straight 1 ½ choruses to solo 14 choruses of 16 bars to 7 choruses 4/4 with (dm) to straight 2 choruses to coda. (FM)
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**Stockholm, March 4, 1959**

Same. Six titles were recorded for Swedish Radio:

There Will Never Be Another You	Solo 5 choruses of 32 bars to 3 choruses 4/4 with (dm) to solo 32 bars to very long coda. (FM)
Stay As Sweet As You Are	Intro 4 bars to solo 64 bars to long coda. (S)
I've Told Every Little Star	Straight 34 bars to solo 64 bars to duet with (b) 32 bars to 64 bars 4/4 with (dm) to straight 32 bars to long coda. (FM)
How High The Moon	Solo 6 choruses of 32 bars to 2 choruses 8/8 with (dm). Solo 40 bars to fade out. (FM)
Oleo	Straight with (b) to solo 64 bars. Solo 16 bars. Solo 64 bars to straight with (b) 32 bars to coda. (F)
Paul's Pal	Straight 1 chorus to solo 5 choruses of 32 bars to 5 choruses 4/4 with (dm). Solo 32 bars to straight 32 bars to coda. (FM)

**Stockholm, March 4, 1959**

Same, except Joe Harris (dm) replaces La Roca for this occasion only.

Three titles were recorded at Södra Teatern:

It Don't Mean A Thing	Solo 5 choruses of 32 bars to 3 choruses 4/4 with (dm) to 2 choruses duet with (b) to
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	solo 32 bars to coda. (F)
Paul's Pal	Straight 1 chorus to solo 2 choruses of 32 bars to 1 chorus duet with (b) to 2 choruses 4/4 with (dm) to solo 2 choruses to coda. (M)
Love Letters	Solo 6 choruses of 32 bars. (M)

SR's European tour resulted in a few appearances captured on tape, and the first and most important one took place in Stockholm. More than one hour of brilliant trio music is issued on CD and offers the beautiful ballad of "... Sweet ..." and a long gorgeous version of the famous "St. Thomas". And how he plays, and plays with, "... Moon"! And wails along with "... Thing"! And the highlight "Love Letters" with the first two and the final chorus unaccompanied, one of the finest SR items to be found in the late fifties!!! There are some Vanguardian proportions over the Stockholm sessions, both quantitatively and qualitatively!!!

#### Stockholm, March 1959

Sonny Rollins (ts), Henry Grimes (b), Pete LaRoca (dm).

One title, date given as Nov 7, 1960, probably the date of broadcast or TV presentation:

It Don't Mean A Thing	Solo 5 choruses of 32 bars to chase with (dm) to long coda. (F)
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#### SONNY ROLLINS TRIO

#### Zürich, March 5, 1959

Sonny Rollins (ts), Henry Grimes (b), Pete La Roca (dm).

Five titles were recorded at broadcast Radio DRS:

I Remember You	Solo 4 choruses of 36 bars to 3 choruses 4/4 with (dm). Solo 3 choruses to coda. (F)
I've Told Every Little Star	Straight 34 bars to solo 3 choruses of 32 bars to 2 choruses 4/4 with (dm). Solo 3 choruses to very long coda. (FM)
Oleo	Straight and duet with (b) 3 choruses of 32 bars to 2 choruses 4/4 with (dm). Solo 8 bars. Duet with (b) 32 bars to coda. (F)
Will You Still Be Mine?	Solo 2 choruses of 56 bars to 16 bars 4/4 with (dm). Solo 8 bars. Solo 2 choruses to coda. (F)
It Could Happen To You	Intro 4 bars to solo 2 choruses of 32 bars to coda. (S)

Same quality of performance but less of sound quality here in Switzerland. SR wails along happily, mainly in uptempo, on four fascinating titles, of which "... Star" possibly is some highlight. And a lovely ballad in "... Happen ...", partly unaccompanied, is a must!!

#### SONNY ROLLINS TRIO

#### Laren, March 7, 1959

Personnel as above. Three titles:

I've Told Every Little Star	Straight 34 bars to solo 64 bars to 64 bars 4/4 with (dm) to straight 32 bars to long coda. (FM)
I Want To Be Happy	Straight 32 bars to solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. Acc. (b) 32 bars. Straight 32 bars to long coda. (F)
A Weaver Of Dreams	Intro to solo 48 bars to very long coda. (S)

Most interesting is the slow and beautiful "... Dreams", the only version of this song on the tour.

#### SONNY ROLLINS TRIO

#### Frankfurt, March 9, 1959

Personnel as above. Four titles:

It Don't Mean A Thing	Solo 4 choruses of 32 bars to 3 choruses 4/4 with (dm).
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	Solo 32 bars to coda. (F)
Cocktails For Two	Solo 64 bars to long coda. (S)
I've Told Every Little Star	Solo 6 choruses of 32 bars. Straight 32 bars to long coda. (M)
I Want To Be Happy	Straight 32 bars to duet with (b) 32 bars. 3 choruses 8/8 with (dm). Straight 32 bars to long coda. (F)

Another trio performance, this time in Germany, same excellent quality! "... Thing" is very fast and furious but excellent timed, "Cocktails ..." is a most lovely ballad, but the cream of the cake is the magnificent "... Little Star"!!

**SONNY ROLLINS TRIO** **Aix-en-Provence, March 11, 1959**  
Sonny Rollins (ts), Henry Grimes (b), Kenny Clarke (dm).  
Three titles recorded live:

Woody'n You	Solo 11 choruses of 32 bars to 6 choruses 4/4 with (dm). 3 choruses 4/4 with (dm) to solo 32 bars to long coda. (FM)
But Not For Me	Solo 10 choruses of 32 bars to 14 choruses 4/4 with (dm) to solo 32 bars to coda. (M)
Lady Bird	Straight with (dm) 2 choruses of 32 bars to solo 5 choruses to acc. (b) 5 choruses and 8 bars to 6 choruses 4/4 with (dm) to 1 chorus "chaos" to 7 choruses 8/8 with (dm) to solo 2 choruses to long coda. (FM)

A very interesting session to conclude the fifties, prematurely. Three very long items seemingly without constraints, more than seventeen minutes each, and SR plays with sovereign command of his tenorsax, giving all he has got of rhythmic creativity and freedom, obviously experimenting heavily in a way he never would have done in a recording studio (and not everything sounds good). Heavy music, perhaps, this tight communion of tenorsax, bass and drums, but jazz history is being written with this trio, and a chapter is closed: The pianoless trio exploitation is exhausted, nobody can do better within this concept!! Nevertheless it is impossible to understand why SR decided to retire from music when he really was at the summit. Almost three years should pass before he reentered the jazz scene, and did he really appear with something completely new worthwhile exercising for so long? The question will be answered in the next decade!!!

**SONNY ROLLINS QUINTET** **Chi. Aug. 1959**  
Freddie Hubbard (tp), Sonny Rollins (ts), Jodie Christian (p), Victor Sproles (b), Wilbur Campbell (dm).  
Two titles were recorded at the Sutherland Hotel (James Accardi collection):

4:38	I Can't Get Started (NC)	Intro 4 bars. Duet with (tp) 16+8 bars, solo 8 bars on bridge. Duet 24 bars (NC). (S)
27:05	Confirmation	Solo ca. 52 choruses of 32 bars. (F)

Postscript of Oct. 10, 2021: This is a major jazz archeological discovery!! First a fine "... Started" with excellent copleying tenorsax/trumpet, but unfortunately far from complete. And then, as far as I can see, "Confirmation", the longest tenorsax solo ever recorded in my solographies, more than twentyfive minutes!! This means not only quantity but quality, and it confirms SR's incredible improvisational powers.

Almost three years pass before SR again is heard from:

**SONNY ROLLINS QUARTET** **NYC. Jan. 30, 1962**  
Sonny Rollins (ts), Jim Hall (g), Bob Cranshaw (b), Harry T. Saunders (dm).  
One title was recorded for RCA Victor, issued as "The Bridge":

1260	God Bless The Child	7:24. (S)
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**NYC. Feb. 13, 1962**  
Same except Ben Riley (dm) replaces Saunders. Two titles:

1264	John S.	7:36. (F/S)
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1265	You Do Something To Me	6:45. (M)
1266	Where Are You?	5:05. (S)

**NYC. Feb. 14, 1962**

Same. Two titles:

1262	Without A Song	7:23. (FM/S)
1263	The Bridge	5:55. (F)

Sonny Rollins is back after his selfimposed exile of almost three years. There may have been a conglomerate of reasons for his absence, possibly music was just one of them. I do not want to involve in speculations nor join in myth building. I just want to listen to his music and think about what I find. And I hate to say it, but I am not very enthusiastic. To try to improve the artistry of the SR of the fifties was to me an impossible task, after all he was a giant on the top of the jazz world. With regard to "The Bridge"-sessions, I think it lacks structure. The accompanying musicians are excellent, but when we remember the epochmaking trio-format, why add a guitar of all instruments? It does not work for me. He seems to try to 'modernize', the tempi change all the time, and I gave up trying to 'count bars'. There is much beauty here, particularly in very slow tempi on "Where ..." and "... Child", and he swings like before on "The Bridge" title number. However, I have no conviction about progress, I cannot see he has gained anything at all by his absence. And nothing in his later career of half a century indicates that he reached another level of maturity. Later recordings seem to be most interesting and impressing when he plays completely alone without accompaniment. But was that really his goal? To be completely independent of fellow musicians? Anyway, it may be all my fault, I simply cannot see the greatness of jazz development in the sixties. So I will continue to play my old Sonny Rollins records.

The Sonny Rollins solography stops here. Somebody else is urged to take over, more competent and motivated than I am.

Sonny Rollins is reported to still be playing at the time of writing, more than 50 years after the music presented above.

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