

The  
**TENORSAX**  
of  
**HAROLD FLOYD BROOKS**  
**“TINA” “TEENAH”**

Born: Fayetteville, North Carolina, June 7, 1932  
Died: NYC. Aug. 13, 1974

*Introduction:*

There is not so much to say; we could not avoid encountering Tina Brooks on many of the excellent Blue Note record sessions in the years 1958-61, and of course identified him as one of the great tenorsax artists of that era.

*History:*

He first studied C-melody saxophone, beginning soon after his family moved to New York in 1944. He was nicknamed "Tina" (a corruption of "teeny") because of his small stature as a teenager. He first played professionally with a rhythm-and-blues band led by the pianist Sonny Thompson (recording in 1951), studied harmony and theory 1954-55, then joined Lionel Hampton's orchestra for the spring and summer 1955 before working as a freelance musician in New York, where he was befriended by Little Benny Harris and Elmo Hope; Harris was instrumental in gaining for him a recording contract with Blue Note in 1958. In 1959-60 Brooks was Jackie McLean's understudy in the leading role of Jack Gelber's play *The Connection*. Brooks recorded 12 sessions for Blue Note (four as a leader) with such musicians as Art Blakey, Kenny Burrell, Johnny Coles, Kenny Drew, Freddie Hubbard, Jackie McLean, Blue Mitchell, Jimmy Smith and Bobby Timmons; they reveal a solist capable of creating shapely statements and developing them with exceptional clarity and an urgent, infectious sense of swing. An intriguing and original performer, highly rated by his contemporaries, Brooks was influenced by Lester Young, Sonny Rollins, and above all the blues. He died after years of illness caused by drug abuse (ref. The New Grove Dictionary Of Jazz).

## TINA BROOKS SOLOGRAPHY

**SONNY THOMPSON****Cincinnati, Jan. 3, 1951**

Henry Glover, Lee Harper (tp), Tina Brooks (ts), Walter Hiles (bar), Sonny Thompson (p), William Shinglar (g), Zain El Hussaini (b), Bill English (dm), Jesse Edwards (vo-9000,02).

Four titles were recorded for King, no tenorsax solo on 9000 "Jumping With The Rhumba" and 9001 "Gone Again Blues", but:

9002	Uncle Sam Blues	Solo 12 bars. (M)
9003	Smoke Stack Blues	Solo/straight with (p) 12 bars. (S)
9003	Smoke Stack Blues alt.	As above. (S)

Strong and forceful blues tenorsax playing but nothing to indicate a future famous modern artist.

**AMOS MILBURN****LA. Dec. 18, 1952**

Personnel given in Mosaic box: Amos Milburn (p, vo), Wayne Bennett (g), probably with Willie Smith, Tina Brooks (ts), Leroy Robinson (bar), Leonard Sonny Williams (b), Donald Dean (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Aladdin, two have tenorsax obbligato parts, 2042-4 "Why Don't You Do Right" (S) and 2044-8 "Please Mr. Johnson" (S), but most probably by Smith.

**JIMMY SMITH****NYC. Feb. 25, 1958**

Lee Morgan (tp), Lou Donaldson (as), Tina Brooks (ts), Jimmy Smith (org), Kenny Burrell (g), Art Blakey (dm).

Eight titles were recorded for Blue Note, five issued on "Confirmation", "Houseparty" and "The Sermon", three have TB:

tk12	Confirmation	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (FM)
tk13	Au Privave	Solo 12 choruses of 12 bars. (FM)
tk15	The Sermon	Solo 15 choruses of 12 bars. (M)

During a period of four years HB became an almost legendary modern tenorsax player in the Blue Note stable. He seems reasonably confident in his light-toned playing from his very first blowing session and has no problems with sustaining interest for quite a number of choruses. Like Hank Mobley he often is playing soft and laidback, then to push strongly forward with rapid runs. His soloing here is not sensational but very promising.

**TINA BROOKS****NJ. March 16, 1958**

Lee Morgan (tp), Tina Brooks (ts), Sonny Clark (p), Doug Watkins (b), Art Blakey (dm).

Five titles were recorded for Blue Note, issued as "Minor Groove" in Japan, later on Mosaic:

tk7	The Way You Look Tonight	Solo/straight with ens 64 bars to break and solo 3 choruses of 64 bars. 64 bars 4/4 with (tp/dm) to solo/straight with ens 64 bars to coda. (F)
tk9	Nutville	Solo 8 choruses of 12 bars. (M)
tk10	Star Eyes	Solo 16 + 12 bars, (tp) on bridge, to solo 3 choruses of 36 bars. Solo/straight 16 + 8 bars, (tp) on bridge, to ens 4 bars and coda. (M)
tk11	Everything Happens To Me	Solo 32 bars. Solo 32 bars to long coda. (S)
tk15	Minor Move	Solo 2 choruses of 40 bars. (FM)
	Minor Move (alt.)	As above. (FM)

That HB dared to, or was allowed to play with these guys, and even be a nominal leader, show that he already had achieved some reputation and trust among his fellow musicians and at Blue Note! He lifts himself substantially from the more conventional organ session three weeks earlier and plays happily and inspiredly with great guys further along the road towards artistic maturity (note the trumpet in "...

Tonight” and “... Move” or the piano on “Nutville”!). The tempi are varied, and it is amazing how easily he takes on the fast “... Tonight”; at the other end he creates an exciting version of the beautiful ballad “Everything ...”. Fine blues choruses on “Nutville”, a delicate “Star ...”, and possibly the most important title, “... Move”. HB is on the rise, therefore it is negatively surprising that more than two years pass before he gets another session as a leader.

**JIMMY SMITH****NYC. April 7, 1958**

Lou Donaldson (as), Tina Brooks (ts), Jimmy Smith (org), Eddie McFadden (g), Donald Bailey (dm-item 1), Art Blakey (dm-item 2,3,4).

Four titles were recorded for Blue Note at Small's Paradise (others without TB):

tk5	Cool Blues	Solo 11 choruses of 12 bars. (F)
tk11	A Night In Tunisia	Break 4 bars to solo 8 choruses of 32 bars. (F)
tk12	Dark Eyes	Solo 4 choruses of 32 bars. (M)
tk13	Groovin' At Small's	Solo 8 choruses of 12 bars. (M)

I must admit I have some problems with HB. He certainly is an inventive and original performer, no doubt about it, but his sound is not among the most attractive, and his laidback style is sometimes uncharismatic, if you get what I mean. He surprises with fancy quotes like on the second chorus on “Groovin ...”, but the opening chorus of “Cool ...” eludes me, sometimes I cannot quite comprehend what he is trying to do. One might occasionally believe he has problems with high tempi, but then he whips up some extended phrases showing excellent technique. And eight choruses of a tough thing like “... Tunisia”, possibly the most exciting item here, seem to pose no problem! Is HB a real tenorsax giant or just “legendary”, I really don't know.

**KENNY BURRELL****NYC. May 14, 1958**

Louis Smith (tp), Tina Brooks, Junior Cook (ts), Duke Jordan (p-item 1,2,3), Bobby Timmons (p-item 4,5,6), Kenny Burrell (g), Sam Jones (b), Art Blakey (dm).

Nine titles were recorded for Blue Note, issued as “Blue Lights”, no tenorsax on “Autumn In New York” and “The Man I Love”, only JC on “Phinupi” but:

tk1	I Never Knew	Solo 5 choruses of 32 bars (1 <sup>st</sup> (ts)-solo). (F)
tk2	Scotch Blues	Solo 3 choruses of 12 bars (1 <sup>st</sup> (ts)-solo). (M)
tk8	Yes, Baby	Solo 24 bars (1 <sup>st</sup> (ts)-solo). (S)
tk10	Chuckin'	Solo 5 choruses of 32 bars (1 <sup>st</sup> (ts)-solo). Solo 4 bars. (FM)
tk12	Rock Salt	Solo 6 choruses of 12 bars (last (ts)-solo). (SM)
tk14	Caravan	Solo 64 bars (2 <sup>nd</sup> (ts)-solo). (FM)

Lots of good HB on this session with dynamic support from Blakey. His tone is somewhat sour at times, but his originality, as on “Chuckin'” usually more than compensates for this.

**KENNY BURRELL****NYC. Aug. 25, 1959**

Tina Brooks (ts), Bobby Timmons (p), Kenny Burrell (g), Ben Tucker (b), Art Blakey (dm).

Four titles were recorded live for Blue Note at The Five Spot (other titles without HB):

tk8	Swingin'	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. 2 choruses 4/4 with (g/dm). (FM)
tk10	Birks' Works	Solo 8 choruses of 12 bars. (M)
tk11	Lady Be Good	Solo 7 choruses of 32 bars. (F)
tk22	Lover Man	Coda. (S)

Tina is back with Burrell after a break of more than one year, taking three extended tenorsax soli. Comparing his works with Burrell with those of Smith, he obviously feels much more home in the former's lighter rhythmic support. His blues on “... Works” are quite and truly original, “Swingin'” is just that, and he takes the “Lady ...” in uptempo with grace. We are looking forward to see HB's artistic progression in the sixties, although it would last only a few years.

**HOWARD MCGHEE****NYC. June 13, 1960**

Howard McGhee (tp), Tina Brooks (ts), Freddie Redd (p, comp), Milt Hinton (b), Osie Johnson (dm).

Seven titles were recorded for Felsted, issued as "Music From The Connection":

Who Killed Cock Robin?	Solo 40 bars. (FM)
Music Forever	Solo 8+64 bars. (F)
Wigglin'	Solo 32 bars. (SM)
O. D.	Solo 32 bars. (M)
Jim Dunn's Dilemma	Solo 44 bars. (FM)
Time To Smile	Solo 16 bars. (M)
(Theme For) Sister Salvation	Solo 16 bars. (S)

The sixties start favourable for TB on this great session. This is the only time this group of musicians ever played together. Having the highly underrated Redd as the main motor, a mainstream oriented rhythmic support, and McGhee in top shape. He is really cooking on uptempo, with "... Forever" as a very good example, and is emotionally strong on the slow "... Salvation". All items here are highly noteworthy both as a whole and for the fine tenorsax playing, but if one highlight should be picked, I choose the groovy "Wigglin'", with a grandiose reed squeak to introduce TB's insistent solo, but whu cares!?

**FREDDIE HUBBARD****Englewood Cliffs, NJ. June 19, 1960**

Freddie Hubbard (tp), Tina Brooks (ts), McCoy Tyner (p), Sam Jones (b), Clifford Jarvis (dm).

Six titles were recorded for Blue Note, issued as "Open Sesame":

tk3	Hub's Nub	Solo 80 bars. (FM)
tk5	Gypsy Blue (alt.)	As below. (M)
tk6	Gypsy Blue	Solo 34 bars. (M)
tk8	Open Sesame (alt.)	As below. (F)
tk9	Open Sesame	Solo 2 choruses of 64 bars. (F)
tk11	One Mint Julep	Solo 24 bars. (M)
tk17	But Beautiful	Solo 16 bars. (S)
tk22	All Or Nothing At All	Solo 64 bars. (F)

Some weeks for TB! A few days after the previous successful session, here we have another also of everlasting quality; remember this is Hubbard's first session under his own name, 22 years old, and he plays for life, as it should be his last one! TB takes the challenge and is magnificent all over. Take his exciting uptempo on the two takes of the album number, and the even faster "All ...", and then continue with the only ballad on the session, "... Beautiful", and you will be convinced of his qualities as a true and dedicated artist with his horn, and his emotional depth. There is also very strong blues on "Gypsy ..." and "... Julep", great! Everybody involved, also Blue Note itself, should be very proud of this session!!

**TINA BROOKS****Englewood Cliffs, NJ. June 25, 1960**

Freddie Hubbard (tp), Tina Brooks (ts, comp-except "Nothing ..."), Duke Jordan (p), Sam Jones (b), Art Taylor (dm).

Six titles were recorded for Blue Note, issued as "True Blue":

tk5	Miss Hazel	Solo 3 choruses of 40 bars. (F)
tk7	Good Old Soul	Solo 2 choruses of 38 bars. (SM)
	Good Old Soul (alt.)	As above. (SM)
tk8	Nothing Ever Changes My LFY	Soli 8, 56 and 8 bars. (M)
tk14	True Blue	Solo 3 choruses of 12 bars. (SM)
	True Blue (alt.)	As above. (SM)
tk18	Up Tight's Creek	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (FM)
tk22	Theme For Doris	Solo 80 bars. (FM)

The third magnificent session in a fortnight, now with new piano and bass accompaniment, and there is not much to add to the many praising words already given to TB and his tenorsax playing. He is full of energy in uptempo "... Hazel", "... Creek" and "... Doris" and seems always to be in full control of what he is doing, in fact these are the best items on the session, perhaps equalled by "Nothing ...", having fine interplay with Hubbard. "Good ..." and "True ..." are "down and dirty" and "down home" respectively according to Ira Gitler's liner notes, and they certainly are but perhaps not as exciting as they look like, just good. Mosaic's liner notes hold this session as the best of them all, but in my opinion the competition is very tough on this.

**FREDDIE REDD QUINTET** **Englewood Cliffs, NJ. Aug. 13, 1960**

Jackie McLean (as), Tina Brooks (ts), Freddie Redd (p), Paul Chambers (b), Louis Hayes (dm).

Seven titles were recorded for Blue Note, issued as "Shades Of Redd":

tk1	Thespian	In ens. Solo 56 bars. (FM)
tk4	Blues-Blues-Blues	Solo 40 bars. (SM)
tk5	Shadows	Solo 32 bars. (S)
tk6	Swift	Solo 2 choruses of 40 bars. (F)
tk7	Ole (alt.)	Solo 64 bars. (M)
tk9	Ole	As above. (M)
tk11	Just A Ballad For My Baby	Soli 8 and 8 bars. (S)
tk16	Melanie	Solo 32 bars. (M)
tk17	Melanie (alt.)	As above. (M)

Remembering the preceding Redd session only two months earlier, we can only with grace accept a new and brilliant one. All titles are his compositions, and obviously he succeeds in making his group performing at its very best. TB moves right now within a continuous flow of inspiration, and his lyrical solo on the slow and moving "Shadows" belongs to his greatest recorded works. Nice and slow also on "... My Baby". At the other tempo end he plays "Swift" with full command of ideas and technique. Listen also closely to the two magnificent soli on the gospel-inspired "Melanie", and note the differences in the first eight bars, exciting! The rest of the items all have excellent tenorsax playing, a great session, also for the rest of the quintet.

**JACKIE McLEAN** **Englewood Cliffs, NJ. Sept. 1, 1960**

Blue Mitchell (tp), Jackie McLean (as), Tina Brooks (ts, comp-tk11,12), Kenny Drew (p), Paul Chambers (b), Art Taylor (dm).

Six titles were recorded for Blue Note, issued as "Jackie's Bag", no tenorsax on tk 15 "A Ballad For Doll" but:

tk3	Melonae's Dance	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (FM)
tk5	Appointment In Ghana	Solo 64 bars. (F)
tk6	Medina	Solo 2 choruses of 40 bars. (FM)
tk11	Isle Of Java	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (FM)
tk12	Street Singer	Solo 72 bars. (M)

Everything from Blue Note these days was good, and so was this one. To quote Leonard Feather on the exciting "... Java": "Tina's opening phrase is a deliberately humorous quote; the rest of his solo is full-blooded, passionate and immensely assured". His solo on "Street ..." is unusually intense even for TB, dig this one! The tempi are generally high here, and TB seems to be enjoying himself with no problems, fine soloing on all items.

**TINA BROOKS** **Englewood Cliffs, Oct. 20, 1960**

Blue Mitchell (tp), Tina Brooks (ts), Kenny Drew (p), Paul Chambers (b), Art Taylor (dm).

Five titles were recorded for Blue Note, four issued as "Back To The Tracks":

tk3	Back To The Tracks	Soli 4 and 2 choruses of 24 bars. (FM)
tk7	The Ruby And The Pearl	Solo 5 choruses of 16 bars. (FM)
tk11	For Heaven's Sake	Soli 48 and 8 bars to long coda. (S)
tk13	The Blues And I	Soli 9 and 2 choruses of 12 bars. (FM)

Mosaic's liner notes discusses the relation between the "True Blue" session and this one, but judge for yourself. This one is perhaps slightly more outward oriented with TB really jumping on the (unissued) album title, in fact three gorgeous tenorsax items in fast tempo, with golden leaves to the rhythm section. Finally, we should note the so beautiful "... Sake", and then consider that this is the last time his ballad playing is recorded. What a world we, jazz and Tina Brooks are living in! Such a magnificent artist, so little attention, out you go ...

### **FREDDIE REDD**

**Englewood Cliffs, NJ. Jan. 17, 1961**

Benny Bailey (tp), Jackie McLean (as), Tina Brooks (ts), Freddie Redd (p), Paul Chambers (b), John Godfrey (dm).

Seven titles were recorded for Blue Note, six issued as "Redd's Blues":

tk2	Love Lost	In ens. (S)
tk6	Somewhere	Solo 32 bars. (M)
tk7	Old Spice	Solo 32 bars. (M)
tk11	Blues For Betsy	Solo 48 bars. (FM)
tk18	Now	Solo 64 bars. (FM)
tk20	Cute Doot	Solo 64 bars. (FM)

Another fine session but perhaps not as exciting as many of the others in this immensely fruitful period for TB. He enters too late on the otherwise good "... Betsy", and the highlights seem to be "Old ..." and "Now".

### **TINA BROOKS**

**Englewood Cliffs, NJ. March 2, 1961**

Johnny Coles (tp), Tina Brooks (ts), Kenny Drew (p), Wilbur Ware (b), Philly Joe Jones (dm).

Six titles were recorded for Blue Note, issued as "The Waiting Game":

tk1	Dhyana	Solo 64 bars. (M)
tk6	The Waiting Game	Solo 88 bars. (FM)
tk7	Talkin' About	Solo 4 choruses of 12 bars. (M)
tk19	David The King	Solo 64 bars. (FM)
tk21	One For Myrtle	Solo 5 choruses of 12 bars. (F)
tk22	Stranger In Paradise	Soli 48, 48 and 48 bars to coda. (M)

The end of TB's brief recording career has come already (almost, see below), and this a great session, equal to those of the previous year. "... About" is one item to appreciate with TB following a great solo by the underrated Coles, and then handing over to a brilliant Drew, four groovy tenorsax choruses! Note also how the fast blues is flowing so easy through his horn on "... Myrtle". In fact, all items here have TB at his very best, and it is just a tragedy that he got no more chances, being only 28 years old and artistically only moving upwards. It is tempting to quote Robert Palmer's liner notes: "... given a little time, and a little hope, this group could have moved out beyond the sound, into some other territory that Brooks was already beginning to hear in his head. But there wasn't any hope, not for Tina Brooks, not after one great album that sold little more than nothing, and another, in its own way just as great, that was never even released". And Michael Cuscuna: "TB was a magnificent talent who was among us all too briefly. He was a unique, sensitive improviser who could weave beautiful and complex tapestries through his horn. His lyricism, unity of ideas and inner logic were astounding. Far lesser talents have been far more celebrated. He should have had a happier, more rewarding time on this planet than he did have".

### **RAY CHARLES**

**Sao Paulo, Brazil, Sept. 22, 1963**

Bigband personnel including Tina Brooks, David Newman (ts).

Videotape from concert, one title has TB:

Birth Of A Band.	Break 2 bars. Soli 12 and 12 bars. 24 bars 4/4 with (ts-DN). (F)
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Suddenly TB appears again in a highly unexpected context, 2 ½ years after his sortie from Blue Note and from the upper jazz stage. Although he still is a highly competent musician, this is not his playground, and there is nothing particularly personal and exciting about this finale. Postscript of Jan. 17, 2023: Noal Cohen has seen the video, and TB is not taking the solo with orch 16 bars (FM) on "Just A Little Lovin'".

No further recording sessions.

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