

On May 31, drummer Louis Hayes celebrated his 80th birthday and a new album at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola in New York, surrounded by friends, collaborators and acolytes, including drummers Michael Carvin, Nasheet Waits and Eric McPherson, and trumpeters Jimmy Owens and Jeremy Pelt, the latter of whom sat in. Another presence loomed large: pianist-composer Horace Silver, the subject of Hayes' recent Blue Note debut, *Serenade for Horace*, a heartfelt tribute to the man who gave Hayes his start in 1956 with "Señor Blues." It was the beginning of a three-year collaboration that helped codify both hard bop and the Rudy Van Gelder sound over five albums.

Hayes left Silver in 1959 to join the Cannonball Adderley Quintet, but the two remained close until the hard-bop progenitor's passing in 2014. Stints followed with Oscar Peterson, the Louis Hayes-Woody Shaw Quintet, Stan Getz, McCoy Tyner and the Cannonball Legacy Band, which Hayes leads. Throughout his career he's solidified a place as one of jazz's most soulfully swinging drummers, and become a cornerstone of the legacy of Detroit-born percussionists that includes Elvin Jones, Roy Brooks, Frank Gant and Oliver Jackson, and extends forward to Gerald Cleaver.

At Dizzy's, Hayes used his hyper-responsive left hand to goose the soloists in his sextet while keeping the fugitive spirit alive with his right on the ride cymbal. His approach seemed to declare the ensemble's m.o., which balanced rhythmic ferocity and harmonic adventurousness with a reverence for the Silver *sprezzatura*. The Bronx-based drummer recently reflected on his tenures with Silver, John Coltrane, Dexter Gordon and others, as well as on the close-knit Detroit jazz community and a certain ineffable musical feeling you know when you hear it—what he refers to as "just history getting ready to be made."

BY AIDAN LEVY

LOUIS HAYES





JANETTE BECKMAN

HORACE SILVER

6 Pieces of Silver (Blue Note)

Silver, piano; Donald Byrd, trumpet; Hank Mobley, tenor saxophone; Doug Watkins, bass; Hayes, drums. Recorded in 1956.



The first time I recorded in a studio was with Horace Silver in 1956, with those magnificent musicians. Horace invited me to come to New York and join his quintet. Hearing myself on record was just fantastic for me. I had just turned 19 years old.

Doug Watkins and Donald Byrd were the two who recommended me to Horace Silver. Over the years, Donald was highly inventive. I really didn't know Doug or Donald in Detroit. They were a little older, and I saw them in a place

called the World Stage that musicians were in control of, like Kenny Burrell and Barry Harris and others. But Doug did come back to Detroit, and at one point we were at this place called the West End [Hotel], where the artists used to gather after 2 o'clock, when the clubs would close. He went back to New York, and the Jazz Messengers were disbanding. Art Blakey was keeping the Jazz Messengers and Horace was starting his group, so the timing was just marvelous.

Horace never wrote anything out for me. He wrote music out for the other guys in the band, naturally, but with me he would say, "Louis, do what you do and just create." And that's what I did on "Señor Blues." I listened to Horace play the piano, and I came up with that way of approaching that composition, and I'm very happy that I did.

YUSEF LATEEF

Jazz Mood (Savoy)

Lateef, tenor saxophone, flute, arghul, scraper; Curtis Fuller, trombone, tambourine; Hugh Lawson, piano; Ernie Farrow, bass, rabat; Hayes, drums; Doug Watkins, finger cymbals, percussion. Recorded in 1957.



I had been appearing at the World Stage before, but with Yusef, how I got the job I do not know. Naturally I knew who he was, but how he got to where he knew who I was, I'm not sure of that. The World Stage wasn't a place where people worked actually. It was just a place where artists

came and enjoyed themselves, and the audience came and enjoyed themselves. There wasn't any alcohol or anything like that, so that was not a club where you made money.

But he asked me to play with him at Klein's Show Bar on 12th Street [in Detroit], and I was not old enough to be in. You were supposed to be 21 to be appearing in a place that sold alcohol in Detroit at the time. I wasn't even close; I was about 18. So I was there with the group for a period of time, and we played four or five nights a week. With that personnel, we had the top job in Detroit at that time. I lost the job after they

found out I was about 18. But luckily, that's just when Doug and Donald were there and went back to New York and said something to Horace. Things happen like that.

With Yusef, we had such a wonderful relationship and rapport. So when I came to New York and joined Horace Silver's quintet, Yusef came to New York and we recorded here—I didn't record with them in Detroit. I was already in the Horace Silver Quintet, but I recorded with that group in New York, and I think we did at least two albums [*Stable Mates* and *Before Dawn: The Music of Yusef Lateef*].

Ernie Farrow was a bassist who's passed away. He could have been a big force playing bass in New York and the world, but he chose to stay in Detroit. He was also Alice Coltrane's [half-brother]. So Alice was the same age as I am, and we used to play together in different homes in Detroit. Hugh Lawson was a friend in Detroit, and his contribution to that group was fantastic. He did come to New York and was here with Harry "Sweets" Edison.

I had an opportunity to appear with Yusef, not only in Detroit, but Yusef was on my first recording date as a leader in New York on Vee-Jay Records [*Louis Hayes*]. He was also with Cannonball Adderley; the quintet turned into a sextet when Yusef joined. So we had that opportunity to make that history also.



► Horace Silver (left) and Hayes confer at the 1956 session for the pianist's *6 Pieces of Silver*

FRANCIS WOLFF/MOSAIC IMAGES



► Hayes at the Van Gelder Studio during Silver's *Finger Poppin'* session in 1959

FRANCIS WOLFF/MOSAIC IMAGES

“Horace [Silver] never wrote anything out for me. He wrote music out for the other guys in the band, naturally, but with me he would say, ‘Louis, do what you do and just create.’ And that’s what I did on ‘Señor Blues.’”

Gene Taylor was a little older than I was, but I did know him as a kid in Detroit, so when we got together in New York with Horace Silver, instantly it was just the way it was supposed to be. Gene knew exactly what to do and he was a strong bassist, a good-feeling person. Gene came there after Doug Watkins and Teddy Kotick, in that order. With Gene, we had it together. The feeling was just magnificent. It was just history getting ready to be made.

CECIL TAYLOR

Stereo Drive (United Artists)

Taylor, piano; John Coltrane, tenor saxophone [credited as “Blue Train”]; Kenny Dorham, trumpet; Chuck Israels, bass; Hayes, drums. Recorded in 1958; reissued in 1963 as Coltrane Time.



I had the opportunity to play a couple jobs with Coltrane in Brooklyn. My assessment of it is that [it’s] history I was able to make at a young age. I have nothing to say about whether I like it or dislike it—I love it! I recorded with Coltrane, Donald Byrd, Paul Chambers and Red Garland [*Lush*

Life], and with [trumpeter] Wilbur Harden [on *Mainstream 1958: The East Coast Jazz Scene*] with Coltrane, Doug Watkins, bass, and Tommy Flanagan, piano. So that’s at least three times I had the opportunity to make history with John Coltrane. And those three albums, I put them right up there at the top of my all-time recording dates.

HORACE SILVER

Finger Poppin’ With the Horace Silver Quintet (Blue Note)



Silver, piano; Blue Mitchell, trumpet; Junior Cook, tenor saxophone; Gene Taylor, bass; Hayes, drums. Recorded in 1959.

By that time I had been exposed to New York for a period of time. I got here in ’56, so my ability to perform had grown by that time. I enjoy *Finger Poppin’*; well,

I enjoy all of the albums I did with Horace. But I was very comfortable with who I was [by the time we recorded *Finger Poppin’*], so as far as feeling, that’s one of my favorites. And the personnel, we got along very well.

HORACE SILVER

Blowin’ the Blues Away (Blue Note)

Silver, piano; Blue Mitchell, trumpet; Junior Cook, tenor saxophone; Gene Taylor, bass; Hayes, drums. Recorded in 1959.



Blowin’ the Blues Away was the last recording date I did with Horace Silver at that time with his quintet, [before] I joined Cannon[ball Adderley]. The [final] one was [1997’s] *A Prescription for the Blues*. Horace and myself got along very well together, and after I left his group, we still got along well. We stayed in touch with each other periodically through the years.

I will say this about Rudy Van Gelder: Rudy listened first to the artists, how they wanted to be recorded. He took it from there and developed a sound, a Rudy Van Gelder sound, but he listened to the artists.

NANCY WILSON/CANNONBALL ADDERLEY

Nancy Wilson/Cannonball Adderley (Capitol)

Wilson, vocals; Adderley, alto saxophone; Nat Adderley, cornet; Joe Zawinul, piano; Sam Jones, bass; Hayes, drums. Recorded in 1961.



With Cannonball it was a different approach to the way we dealt with recording dates. We did not rehearse a lot—not at all. Cannon and the band decided on what we were going to do, and it was participation from everyone in the group as far as how we were going to approach whichever compositions we were going to play. Everyone had a good feeling. Cannon had a family band, so we were comfortable with each other and we could do what we felt like doing. It wasn’t a big thing. ... We came up with

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But the arrangements were the main thing. You have to make sure you do things on the highest level at all times.”

ideas and we just did it! And we were friends. [Sometimes] you have to work it out for long periods of time and try to figure out what you’re going to do; that’s one way of approaching things, and I have no qualms about that. But with Cannon, it was just natural. And Nancy [Wilson], she was and is such a wonderful-feeling person, and we all got along so well.

OSCAR PETERSON

Blues Etude (Limelight)

Peterson, piano; Ray Brown, Sam Jones, bass; Hayes, drums. Recorded in 1965-66.



Well, that was a change in my way of dealing with this art form. He and Ray Brown had been together for 15, 16 years with Ed Thigpen. Playing [in the trio format] is different because it’s only a trio, so making mistakes is not something that you want to do.

Knowing the arrangement and playing it and doing the things that you’re supposed to do was for me very important at that time. I’m glad I was able to deal with Oscar Peterson—from the point of view of the trio, I can’t think of anything being any better, that’s for damn sure. Having the opportunity to be in Ray Brown’s company and especially to play with him—what a guy.

Oscar and I had a wonderful relationship. I was probably the only drummer he asked to be with the trio two times, because Oscar could be difficult to deal with! Making that history with Oscar was a challenge for me. It was not a physical challenge, because I had the facility to do whatever Oscar wanted me to do, but the arrangements were the main thing. You have to make sure you do things on the highest level at all times.

JOE HENDERSON SEXTET

The Kicker (Milestone)

Henderson, tenor saxophone; Mike Lawrence, trumpet; Grachan Moncur III, trombone; Kenny Barron, piano; Ron Carter, bass; Hayes, drums. Recorded in 1967.



That was one of the greatest feelings. I don’t listen to myself too much on albums or dates I did a long time ago, but that’s one I like listening to. I enjoy Ron Carter. See, with Sam Jones we had a reputation of a certain feeling, and we recorded with a lot of other artists. While we were with Cannon, they would want that feeling that Sam and myself had, so we were one of the few rhythm sections that had a reputation like that. But with Ron Carter on that date the feeling was so magnificent, so I like listening to that when I’m in my place, just to groove. I didn’t know Ron in Detroit, but whenever I’ve had the opportunity to play with him, it’s magnificent.

Joe Henderson was a friend, and when you say Joe Henderson to me, I have to mention Freddie Hubbard, because Freddie was my friend first, and I started a group with the three of us. With Joe, his knowledge and creativity on that date knock me out.

DEXTER GORDON

Homecoming: Live at the Village Vanguard (CBS)

Gordon, tenor saxophone; Woody Shaw, trumpet, flugelhorn; Ronnie Mathews, piano; Stafford James, bass; Hayes, drums. Recorded in 1976.



Working with Dex was fun. I had a group with Woody Shaw, Junior Cook, Ronnie Mathews and Stafford James, and that was one of the first groups I had traveling in Europe, and Maxine [Gordon] was handling the business. And Dex was over there in Copenhagen, and on occasion he would make a job with us at the [Copenhagen club] [Jazzhus] Montmartre. So we came to New York, and Dex came back to New York. That recording date at the Vanguard was a big deal. It was a great feeling, and we were very comfortable with each other, because we had already performed together in Europe. Actually, it was my band, but it didn’t say that on the album. But anyway, Dex was very comfortable with that [group], and the guys in the band were very comfortable with each other.

Dex was a wonderful person. Charlie Parker is a person who really got me involved in this art form on the highest level. Listening to Charlie Parker, he made me think a certain way. And Dex, he’s one of the people who came out of that era that meant so much to so many people. And I’m just glad to have made history with all these people.

► "Horace started [my career] out for me," Hayes says



JANETTE BECKMAN

LOUIS HAYES/ JUNIOR COOK QUINTET

Ichi-Ban (Timeless)



Hayes, drums; Cook, tenor saxophone; Woody Shaw, trumpet; Ronnie Mathews, piano; Stafford James, bass; Guilherme Franco, percussion.

Recorded in 1976.

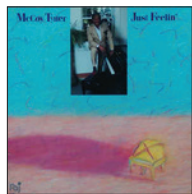
I was living in Brooklyn; I was no longer living in Manhattan. I had this opportunity to bring a group to Europe and do some touring. I did not have a band at that time, so I put it together. I knew Stafford James and Ronnie Mathews, and I chose to get those people together. That's how it started.

Ronnie was in Brooklyn, Stafford was in Brooklyn, Junior was my friend from Horace, and Woody was this magnificent young person coming up playing the trumpet. We got together, and again it was one of those things where everybody was so in tune that we could play very well together. We could just knock people out because it was so strong. We were young.

MCCOY TYNER

Just Feelin' (Palo Alto)

Tyner, piano; Avery Sharpe, bass; Hayes, drums; Babatunde Lea, percussion. Recorded in 1985.



I was with McCoy for over two years. McCoy and I knew each other while he was with Mr. John Coltrane, and especially when I was with Cannonball. McCoy is such an interesting personality and in the way he plays. When McCoy wanted to have this trio, I had been

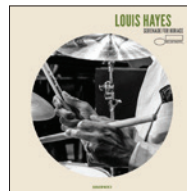
performing with a couple groups that I had as a leader, but I needed a change. At that time in my life, I thought it was best for me to go with McCoy. I'm very glad I did.

We got along superbly. The way he attacks and plays the piano is some real percussion. Boy, McCoy is rough. So the time that I spent with him and Avery Sharpe was a very wonderful period in my life. We became friends offstage, and musically we became friends. I feel so honored to have been able to spend that time with those guys.

LOUIS HAYES

Serenade for Horace (Blue Note)

Hayes, drums; Josh Evans, trumpet; Abraham Burton, tenor saxophone; Steve Nelson, vibraphone; David Bryant, piano; Dezron Douglas, bass; Gregory Porter, vocals. Recorded in 2016.



In my life, what I have been able to accomplish with all of these different magnificent artists, Horace started it out for me. After his passing, people would ask me sometimes to participate or do something and I didn't want to do it. So I'll say a little bit about that.

Horace's family and myself, we got involved—together. That's why the recording date is named what it's named, because his wife [Jemela Mwelu] named it. And his son Gregory put a paragraph in the liner notes of what he wanted to say. That's why I wanted to do it.

And this is important. I chose the artists that I wanted for this recording date because I wanted a certain sound and a feeling, and the family was involved in that. And it was not just me choosing all the compositions. We talked it over in terms of how we were going to approach this and what we were going to do.

I wanted to record it on Blue Note, because [label head Don Was and I] had a good rapport together. I did five with Horace [at Blue Note], so that's what I wanted to do. I did not want to do it on these different labels. Maxine Gordon set it up, and Maurice [Montoya], who's still with me booking jobs, all of these people had to come together for this to happen. So I really feel good about Blue Note and their participation in bringing this to fruition. We can talk about all these things, but without them coming together and making it happen, there's nothing. **JT**