



My Top 20 Favorite Jazz Saxophone Recordings

By Dr. Paul Haar, Associate Professor of Saxophone

(In random order)

Michael Brecker: *Michael Brecker*

I was about 17 when this album came out. Like many of my album choices back then, I picked it because it had a saxophone on the front. When I put it on the turntable, I knew this music was something unique. The originality of the writing and the playing is like nothing I had ever heard before or since.

Lee Konitz & Warne Marsh: *Lee Konitz with Warne Marsh*

I first heard this recording in a jazz history class in 1990. I immediately went to my teacher (the wonderful Dick Wright) and asked what the name of the recording was. He handed me a tape saying, "I knew you would ask." The interaction and "oneness" of these two players is unmatched in jazz history.

Gary Foster and Alan Broadbent: *Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Duo Series*

There are just some recordings that say "class". Both of these two great players know how to paint pictures in sound. Their love and reverence for melody is evident. I have been listening to this recording almost daily since it came out.

Cannonball Adderley: *Know What I Mean with Bill Evans*

Again, I purchased this because of the saxophone on the front cover. This album is a classic example of all the wonderful things possible on the saxophone. And in the hands of Cannonball you are sure to get great swing, masterful technique and thoughtful knowledge of the musical line.



Stan Getz: *Voyage*

I play the saxophone because of Stan Getz. As John Coltrane once said, "Stan is how we all would play if we could." His "heather and honey" tone along with the amazing sidemen accompanying him make this one of my desert island picks.

Jerry Bergonzi: *Lineage*

How did I come to chose this one? I blindly pointed to it from my vast collection of Jerry Bergonzi recordings. Anything this man touches is guaranteed to be an adventure for the listener. From his sound, to his mastery of harmony and rhythm, Jerry Bergonzi should be in the manual of how to play the saxophone.

John Coltrane: *Thelonious Monk Quartet with JOhn Coltrane at Carnegie Hall*

This might be an odd pick for those Coltrane fans out there. There are many wonderful recordings of Trane. But this one is so well recorded and mastered that the listener gets the clearest glimpse of what it must have been like to hear him live. The power and command he has over the instrument instantly grabs the listener.

Joe Henderson: *The Standard Joe*

This recording shows Joe Henderson in all his brilliance. In the trio setting, the listener is treated to a masterclass on time, tone, rhythmic usage, melodic construction and interplay.

Sonny Rollins: *The Bridge*

I love history. This famous album is a documentary of the work Sonny did on his hiatus from jazz from 1959-1962. This recording is so magical. From Sonny's rhythmic work to the melodic lines constructed with Jim Hall....must have recording!

Ben Webster: *Ben Webster and Associates*

Very few people have such a beautiful sound that it will cause a car accident. That's what happened to my friend and I when we heard Ben play *Time After Time*. We were so drawn into the breathy beauty coming out of the car speakers...well...we forgot to pay attention to the driving.



Pete Christlieb & Warne Marsh: *Conversations with Warne*

Warne Marsh is widely recognized as one of the purest improvisors in jazz history. This recording brings two of the great tenor players in modern history together in a project that is built around improvisation and interaction. One of the finest duo recordings on record.

Johnny Hodges: *Johnny Hodges with Billy Strayhorn and The Orchestra*

No saxophonist had a more beautiful sound or a more soulful and sultry way of approaching a ballad. This recording places the longtime Ellington sideman in the spotlight with the great Billy Strayhorn leading the Ellington Orchestra. Be sure to share this recording with your trumpet playing friends....Cat Anderson is amazing!

Dexter Gordon: *Our Man in Paris*

When it comes to learning to play the tenor saxophone, EVERY student must pass through the works of the Dexter Gordon. This recording is standard study material for every modern tenor player. One listen and you will learn why.

Chris Potter: *Gratitude*

Listening to Chris Potter is like watching a great method actor at work. He is the music he plays. Where this recording pays tribute to his musical idols, it is purely his voice in the music. A wonderful example of the synthesis of influence in one's playing.

Sonny Stitt: *Sonny Stitt Sits in with the Oscar Peterson Trio*

There is an old saying that if you want to be a good player, surround yourself with players who are better than you. I don't know if there are players better than those on this album, but one thing is for sure. Everyone brought their "A game" and brought out the best in each other. This recording swings so hard and has so much amazing technique.

Phil Woods: *Rob McConnell & The Boss Brass Featuring Phil Woods: Boss Brass & Woods*

There are so many great Phil Woods recordings to choose from. This recording is actually under the heading of the late bandleader/composer Rob McConnell. However Woods' playing is classic. From his bebop-laden lines to his masterful touch to a ballad, I can listen to this recording for years.



John Ellis: *John Ellis and Double-Wide: Puppet Mischief*

There are many wonderful young tenor players out there today. But there is something unique about the way John Ellis applies his tradition and his vision to his horn. The uniqueness of his melodies along with his wonderful band makes this such a treat to listen to.

Dick Oatts & Jerry Bergonzi: *Saxology*

This recording has its roots in the work done by Lee Konitz and Warne Marsh, but is firmly planted in what is happening today. Bergonzi and Oatts are two of the finest living musicians on the planet. Their work on this album (which has no chordal instrument) is simply masterful.

Wayne Shorter: *Juju*

This album shows more than masterful tenor playing...it shows his brilliance as a composer. For me this is the recording where history sees Wayne Shorter as a unique voice in music and not just the next tenor player to come after John Coltrane.

Gary Smulyan: *Gary Smulyan with Strings*

Dick Oatts once said, "Every saxophone player is happy that Gary plays the bari...if he didn't we wouldn't work as much." Gary Smulyan is a saxophone master...not just a great baritone saxophonist. His muscular tone and rhythmic bop-driven lines captivate you from the first track. With strings it is a lush ride into his world of music.

