

Ray stepping out of his usual environment to meet Evans in a freer, open, mostly-in-two groove. A fascinating study.

Marc Johnson burst onto the jazz scene in 1978 when he joined what would become Bill Evans's last trio. Born in 1953 in Omaha, Nebraska, Johnson attended North Texas State University, where he played with notables Lyle Mays and the North Texas State One O' Clock Band. He played with Woody Herman's Orchestra for a hot minute in 1977 before joining Evans. Johnson recalls, "I was a bit in awe—there was this legacy that was pretty amazing, from Scott through Eddie Gomez, with stops for people like Gary Peacock. I was less prepared than several bassists at the time, but I think Bill saw youthful exuberance. The only advice he ever gave me was to play with affirmation." The trio with Evans was the perfect platform for the technically advanced Johnson. He had chops and musicality like Gomez and LaFaro, yet he projected his own voice in the trio. The rhythm section of Johnson and drummer Joe LaBarbera was one of Evans's greatest. Some of their best work was captured in 1980 on *Turn Out the Stars: The Final Village Vanguard Recordings* [Warner Bros.]. After Evans's death, Johnson played regularly with Stan Getz, John Abercrombie, and others before forming his own group, Bass Desires, in 1985. He performed often in the '90s with his group Right Brain Patrol, and he continues to be a sought-after sideman.

The bass players of Bill Evans reflect a large part of the jazz tradition, from the straightahead bebop playing of Teddy Kotick, Sam Jones, and Percy Heath to the technical extremes of Scott LaFaro, Eddie Gomez, and Marc Johnson. Bill Evans holds a place in the musical hearts of all of these great bassists.

### For Further Listening

(Contains all of the recordings with Bill Evans and bassists Teddy Kotick, Sam Jones, Percy Heath, Scott LaFaro, and Chuck Israels)

*The Complete Riverside Recordings*, Riverside OJC

(Eddie Gomez as a leader)

*Gomez*, Denon; *Next Future*, Stretch/GRP; *Dedication*, Evidence

(Marc Johnson with others)

*John Abercrombie/Marc Johnson/Peter Erskine*, ECM

(Gary Peacock as a leader with Keith Jarrett and Jack DeJohnette)

*Tale of Another*, ECM

### Eddie Gomez's True Dedication

This solo (Ex. 1) comes from the Eddie Gomez trio recording *Dedication* [Evidence]. This virtuosic extrapolation on the standard "Green Dolphin Street" shows Gomez at his best—melodic, swinging, and projecting an unmistakably personal sound. The challenge in soloing over a well-known standard is that there are already definitive recordings of the song, in this case the most famous being versions from Miles Davis and Bill Evans.

The Eddie Gomez trio plays the first half of the tune in the key of C and the second half in the key of E $\flat$ . Gomez says, "A lot of people like to play it in C and a lot in E $\flat$ , so I thought we would just play it in both keys. I like to keep a pedal feel through the A sections." Gomez is masterful in his melodic construction and use of tones inside and outside of the key center. "I like my solo on this cut because it has a lot of clarity, but it also has a lot of expressiveness. Without the expressiveness, it's just a nice solo. With expression, those non-harmonic tones I use make it sound 20th-century."

### Ex. 1

Here are some observations about the melodic and rhythmic techniques he uses in this virtuoso solo:

- Bars 1–3: The solo opens with a strong harmonic spelling of the Cmaj7 chord. Gomez anticipates the Cm by playing the Eb on the "and" of four in bar 2.

Ex. 1

$\text{♩} = 68$   $\text{8va}$  Cmaj7 Cm7

1  $\text{8va}$  Dmaj7 D $\flat$ maj7 Cmaj7

5  $\text{8va}$  Dm7 G7 Cmaj7

9  $\text{8va}$  Fm7 B $\flat$ 7 E $\flat$ maj7 Fm7 B $\flat$ 7

13  $\text{8va}$  E $\flat$ maj7 E $\flat$ m7

17  $\text{8va}$  Fmaj7 Emaj7 E $\flat$ maj7 C7

21  $\text{8va}$  Fm7 Dm7 $\flat$ 5 G7 $\sharp$ 9 Cm7 Am7 $\flat$ 5 D7 $\flat$ 9

25  $\text{8va}$  Gm7 C7 $\sharp$ 9 Fm7 B $\flat$ 7 E $\flat$ maj7 Dm7 G7

29  $\text{8va}$

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Gomez anticipates the Cm by playing the E $\flat$  on the “and” of four in bar 2.