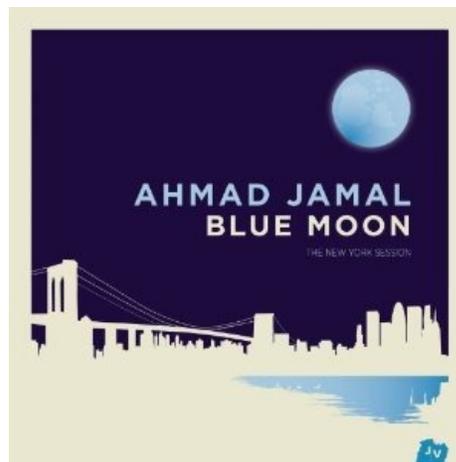


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CD Review: "Blue Moon" by Ahmad Jamal

*Blue Moon*

There are few people alive who can honestly be said to have been an influence on Miles Davis. Fewer still who are named in the same breath with Jelly Roll Morton, Fletcher Henderson, Duke Ellington, Art Tatum and Thelonious Monk when speaking of great jazz piano players.

But Ahmad Jamal is that person. Miles once said "All my inspiration comes from Ahmad Jamal." He introduced the concepts of space, silence and dramatic dynamics into jazz performance, proving the adage that it is often what you don't play that is genius. And what is even more amazing is that at 81 years young, he still manages to make his music fresh, young and brilliant. *Blue Moon* is not just his latest album, it's just his latest masterpiece.

As Chris May at *AllAboutJazz* said, "It is tempting to say that, at age 82, Ahmad Jamal carries on getting better and better, but that would be to miss the point. The pianist long ago reached a level of perfection from which it is simply *not possible* to get better. It is a level, however, to which he habitually returns."

"Autumn Rain" Ahmad Jamal from the album "Blue Moon"

In this marvelous collection, Jamal turns to a place where he has not only made his own mark, but from where he has often found his favorite songs. Broadway, and the classic American Cinema. He's also the guy who covered Clint Eastwood's piano parts in *Bridges Of Madison County*. He also includes here three of his original compositions, giving a new interpretation to "Autumn Rain" (above), "Morning Mist" and "I Remember Italy."

The sound on this JazzVillage release is brilliant and you soon realize that those 'Classical Music' engineers have a trick or two. Jazz Village is the Jazz label for

Harmonia Mundi. The sound captured on this disk is so 'live' that you'll wonder if you aren't sitting on stage.

The second thing you will realize is that the arrangements are so modern. Jamal is accompanied by bassist Reginald Veal, drummer Herlin Riley and percussionist Manolo Badrena. Veal has caught my ear in the past with his work with Wynton Marsalis and Joshua Reddman. These guys together just lock down the rhythm. There is no slacking, no laid back brushes and sleepy plucking, the tempo is spot on and almost pop music in style. But Jamal's ensemble playing is swinging, flawless and masterful.

Once this one is done with you, look through [JazzVillage](#)' small, but bound to grow catalog.

The Dirty Lowdown

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