

# Ahmad Jamal: Blue Moon – review

(Jazz Village)

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**John Fordham**

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**Ahmad Jamal**  
**Blue Moon - Ahmed**  
**Jamal**  
Jazz Village  
2012

Pianist **Ahmad Jamal** (a man even Miles Davis credited as a big influence) is now 81 – and he remains a genius at the art of motivic improvising, repeating a catchy theme (so listeners don't lose the plot) while transforming it with fresh melody. Here, Jamal combines eloquent originals with dazzling makeovers of American standards (Laura, Invitation, Gypsy and the title track), in the inspired company of Wynton Marsalis sidemen **Reginald Veal** (bass) and **Herlin Riley** (drums), with an incandescent **Manolo Badrena** on Latin percussion. Jamal's Autumn Rain opens the show with his trademark grandiloquent chords over a ticking rimshot groove, turning to rolling keyboard-length runs and a funk feel. Blue Moon is a classic firework display of silvery runs and arpeggios full of hints of the tune, the original I Remember Italy is a delicious, tender melody, and the **jazz** standby Woody 'n You is as vivacious a Latin dance as anything

Jamal might have recorded in his early years. Sometimes his virtuosity takes Jamal over the top, but this session looks set to be one of his classics.

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