



ENCOUNTERS

Vicente Archer
Kendrick Scott

Danny Grissett



Criss Cross Jazz 1299

Criss 1299 CD

ENCOUNTERS DANNY GRISSETT

1. **HOPSCOTCH**
(D. Grissett) 4.41
2. **WALTZ FOR BILLY**
(D. Grissett) 7.40
3. **A NEW BEGINNING**
(D. Grissett) 6.03
4. **ENCOUNTERS**
(D. Grissett) 5.55
5. **TOY TUNE**
(W. Shorter) 5.40
6. **SUNRISE**
(D. Grissett) 9.08
7. **IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU**
(Burke-Van Heusen) 7.48
8. **NEVER LET ME GO**
(Evans-Livingstone) 6.10
9. **GIT!**
(D. Grissett) 6.39

TOTAL TIME: 60.20

DANNY GRISSETT piano
VICENTE ARCHER bass
KENDRICK SCOTT drums

Produced by Gerry Teekens
Recording Engineer: Max Bolleman
Mastering: The Masters
Recorded: April 2, 2007
© © 2008 Criss Cross Jazz

Recorded at Systems Two Recording Studios, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Photography: Gildas Boclé
Cover Design: Gerry Teekens/Bloemendaal in Vorm



Criss Cross Jazz, Postbox 1214
7500 BE Enschede, Holland
Phone (31) 53 - 433 03 38
info@crisscrossjazz.com
www.crisscrossjazz.com

All rights reserved. Unauthorized duplication is a violation of applicable laws. Made in Holland

Encounters

You can count on **Danny Grissett** to make big, impressive entrances. His debut on a major-league jazz recording came in 2004 with Vincent Herring's *Mr. Wizard*. The leadoff track was "All God's Children Got Rhythm," and if anything, Grissett's tight piano solo illustrated an opposing point: some of jazz's children have better rhythm, bolder lines, deeper harmonic insight. (I happened to write the liner notes for Danny's second session with Herring, *Ends and Means*).

Since moving to New York from California in 2003, Grissett has steadily risen in profile. As a full-time member of the Tom Harrell Quintet, he performs on Harrell's album *Light On*, playing saucy Fender Rhodes on a number of cuts. Even with the Harrell commitment, he maintains a busy international schedule and can include the likes of Charles Tolliver, Buster Williams, Steve Wilson, Jim Rotondi, Nicholas Payton, Jeremy Pelt and Lage Lund on his sideman résumé. His most recent **Criss Cross** appearance was on Jimmy Greene's *Gifts and Givers* (Criss 1295). Not bad for a classical piano student since age five who came to jazz much later in the game — his imagination fired by Sonny Clark, Mulgrew Miller and Herbie Hancock, among others.

When Grissett debuted as a leader in 2006 with **Promise** (Criss 1281), he made it clear enough that we'd be hearing from him again soon. Happily, he now returns with the finely wrought **Encounters**, preserving the same band lineup as before: **Vicente Archer** on bass and **Kendrick Scott** on drums. Archer has earned praise for his high-profile work with another

piano trio: that of Blue Note recording artist Robert Glasper. Scott has several years with the great Terence Blanchard under his belt. He's also broken out as a bandleader with 2007's *The Source*, not to mention as an entrepreneur and presenter with his intriguing World Culture label. "When these guys interpret my music," says Grissett, "there's always an understanding of what I want in terms of shape. But then they always surprise me as well, with things I never imagined. They're so creative that I knew I had to explore my own music with them again."

While **Promise** featured four of Grissett's smartly polished original compositions, the emphasis was on standards and modernist gems like Coltrane's *Moment's Notice* and Mulgrew Miller's *Eleventh Hour*. **Encounters** has a somewhat similar layout, though the scales tip increasingly toward original music. Two of the tunes first appeared in quintet form on *Mr. Wizard*, the aforementioned Vincent Herring album. With **Encounters**, we're hearing the creative evolution of these pieces and more. The program has a deadly-swinging intensity but an air of poetry, as technically involved as it is lyrically stirring.

Hopscotch, originally heard on Herring's *Mr. Wizard*, is presented here at a brighter tempo. If the syncopated hits sound difficult, they are: "The main melody is actually pretty simple, almost like a march," says Grissett, "but it's tricky because the bass is always an eighth-note away." Both the title and the music came to him after watching a group of kids play hopscotch in his Brooklyn neighborhood. "I was trying to think of how many taps or

reveals. “Kendrick is so musical, and his use of space is amazing.”

Sunrise is “probably my newest tune,” says Grissett, and again it finds him working out his own harmonic signature — darkly hued, polytonal, Hancockian in lineage. “I was exploring different voicings, trying to do a ‘voicings search’ if you will, looking for colors to get out of the piano. Some of the colors ended up leading me to this melody. It was early in the morning, and that’s how the title came about.” He describes the result as “a lyrical melody that manipulates all the off-beats.” Scott has a way of illuminating the tune’s interior spaces. Following Archer’s solo and a concluding melody statement, Grissett ends the take unexpectedly, with an unaccompanied coda.

It Could Happen to You is an in-studio romp, a collective letting-loose on the Burke/Van Heusen classic. “I love the melody, I love the lyrics,” Grissett explains. “I’ve played it with some vocalists. I decided to open it up at first, and we’d just fall into it.” The swing is relentless, but the group dynamics are especially rich and subtle. Archer’s pedal points on the initial two-beat feel resurface later, just before the fiery tag. “I’m very much drawn to those kinds of spontaneous feelings in music,” Grissett says. “Not to say I don’t appreciate arrangements, but when I’m playing, I love the weird balance of not knowing, being a bit uncomfortable, and yet still there’s something grounded.”

Grissett learned the ballad **Never Let Me Go** while playing with vocalist

Vanessa Rubin. “I like picking tunes with a story I can relate to,” he says. “I learn the lyrics and try to get into a tune’s meaning.” He describes this version as “mildly reharmonized,” with certain details inspired by Rubin’s preferred key (A). Archer and Scott enter seamlessly after the introductory phrase, and they proceed with great sensitivity, framing Grissett’s meditative asides and virtuosic flurries. “With Vicente and Kendrick, we can just do one or two takes and they inspire a certain arrangement,” he marvels. “It sounds like a story being created in the moment.”

Git! is “something my auntie used to say when the kids were doing something we weren’t supposed to,” Grissett says. “My cousin and I were born nine days apart so we grew up together and got in our share our trouble. I wanted to create something with that mood, kind of a jam tune.” Soul-jazz suits this trio well, and the take has a live gig feel. But this is no simple vamp — it’s a form with abounding harmonic and rhythmic detail. Scott’s cymbal eighth-notes create a feeling of speed and tension, thrown into contrast by a brief detour into 4/4 swing.

A song from Grissett’s previous album, *On the Edge*, is meant to reflect the precariousness of New York, but it also conveys something about the playing of this advancing pianist, his preferred mode of trio interaction. Even as he finds a certain comfort level in the cauldron of the New York jazz scene, he keeps things on the edge, holding onto the feeling of what he calls “those first really nervous gigs.” That, in part, is what accounts for the electricity of his musical encounters. The other part is more effortless.

With creative associates like Archer and Scott, Grissett is able, in a way, to become an audience member himself. He puts it very simply: "I just love to listen to those guys."

David R. Adler

The Philadelphia Inquirer, Jazz Times