

David Hazeltine

- 1 **Witchcraft** 7:11
C. Coleman & C. Leigh / ASCAP
- 2 **A House Is Not a Home** 6:44
B. Bacharach & H. Lee / ASCAP
- 3 **Yesterday** 5:21
J. Lennon & P. McCartney / ASCAP
- 4 **Who Can I Turn To** 5:28
L. Bricusse & A. Newley / BMI
- 5 **How Deep Is Your Love** 6:05
B. M. & R. Gibb / BMI
- 6 **Moment To Moment** 7:58
H. Mancini & J. Mercer / ASCAP
- 7 **A Time For Love** 6:30
J. Mandel & P. Webster / ASCAP
- 8 **Somewhere** 5:32
L. Bernstein & S. Sondheim / ASCAP
- 9 **For the Love of You** 7:10
Isley Brothers / ASCAP

TOTAL TIME 58:03

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and Mastered by Mike Marciano

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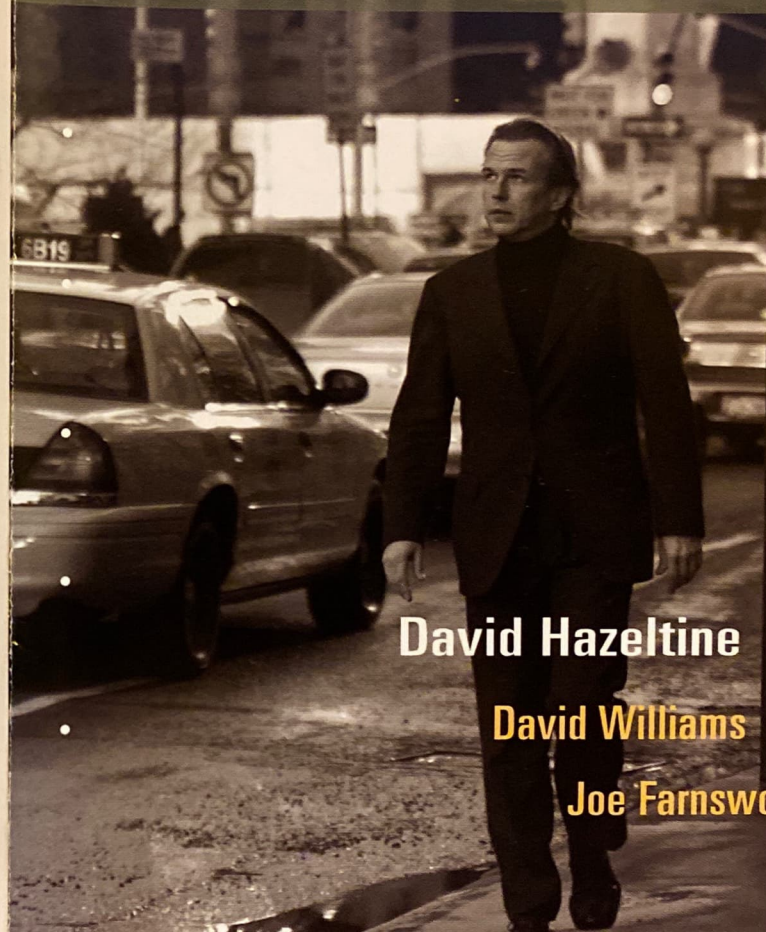
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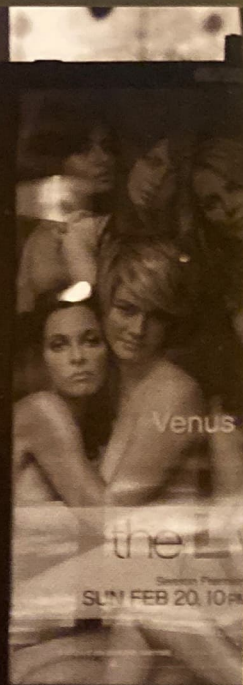
• MODERN STANDARDS



David Hazeltine

David Williams

Joe Farnsworth



records

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MODERN STANDARDS

For many of today's jazz musicians, the wall between the Great American Songbook and modern pop has all but disappeared. Having been influenced by everything from the Beatles to Björk, they've begun to make some of this music an integral part of the jazz repertoire. Pianist David Hazeltine emphasizes the point by calling his seventh Sharp Nine release *Modern Standards*. Putting aside his composer's pen for the moment, he focuses on songs of the '60s and '70s. One could fairly ask whether songs like these still qualify as modern. But it is Hazeltine's approach as a pianist and arranger that is modern. He's revealed it on previous recordings, with covers of songs by Stevie Wonder, Jimmy Webb and others. *Modern Standards* sheds sustained light on this area of Hazeltine's craft. It highlights a period when seismic shifts in popular music placed figures like Johnny Mandel, Burt Bacharach and Lennon & McCartney in a kind of unwitting dialogue.

Originally from Milwaukee, Hazeltine is one of New York's leading straight-ahead pianists, and he's made a mark with his "Classic Trio," featuring bassist Peter Washington and drummer Louis Hayes. But *Modern Standards* boasts a different rhythm section, with David Williams on bass and Joe Farnsworth on drums. Farnsworth has appeared on several Hazeltine dates, and the two share a history as members of the hardbop super-group One For All. Williams, a longtime colleague of Cedar Walton's, has worked with Hazeltine and Farnsworth before, but only separately. He's a big fan of One For All and has written lyrics (on his own initiative) to several of Hazeltine's original tunes. "I have a nice connection with David," Hazeltine says. "He's one of the few bass players that's going after the Sam Jones kind of sound. It's a little bit electric, but not overwhelmingly. It's hip, always swinging. His notes are very connected, so it's a little more modern-feeling."

David Hazeltine
piano
David Williams
bass
Joe Farnsworth
drums

The connection is apparent from the start of Cy Coleman's *Witchcraft*, a jazz staple recorded by Frank Sinatra, and also Bill Evans, in the early '60s. "I didn't want to change too much of the harmony of this tune," Hazeltine says. "But the melody rests a lot," he adds, explaining the off-kilter descending bass lines that he wrote to fill those rests. "They're inspired by Buddy Montgomery, one of my favorite pianists. In Milwaukee Buddy had a full time gig at the Marc Plaza Hotel that ran for more than 10 years, and I'd go hear him. He had this approach to playing standards involving these kinds of strange rhythmic ideas."

A House Is Not a Home is the latest in a string of Burt Bacharach songs that Hazeltine has treated. In Dionne Warwick's definitive version it's an achingly slow bolero. Hazeltine takes it at a much faster clip and borrows harmonic elements from "Mode for Joe" and "Giant Steps." "You can recognize a Burt Bacharach tune," he says. "It's got some special quality—at some point there's always some sweet relationship between the melody and the

harmony. It's almost tear jerking." In this instance, David hears the sweet spot in bars 9 - 12 of the form, in the cadence from Bb major 7 to A7 to D minor.

Yesterday is Hazeltine's first-ever solo piano piece on record. "To do modern standards without a Beatles song seemed like a bad idea," he says. "This is a tricky tune because it keeps going to the same places—it's always going to the relative minor. I change keys only once, but originally I had the idea to change more."

Hazeltine's arrangement of *Who Can I Turn To* first appeared on trombonist Steve Davis's 2001 album, *Systems Blue*. The song itself is from "The Roar of the Greasepaint—The Smell of the Crowd," but Hazeltine's reference point is the Bill Evans reading from *Trio '65*. "When you're playing trio it's hard not to think about Bill," he says. "I used to spend all my spare time figuring out his voicings. At a certain point I got so locked into Bird and Coltrane that I just couldn't take Bill Evans anymore. But in the last few years I've found myself going back to him and being deeply moved."

With *How Deep Is Your Love*, Hazeltine may have given the world its first straight-ahead jazz take on the Bee Gees. "When I started dating, this song was popular," he recalls. "I never liked that kind of music; I was too much of a jazz purist. But this tune I remember hearing a lot. There's something sweet about it, and there's something I like about the Bee Gees in general, all these years later." Hazeltine decided to feature Joe Farnsworth on this bright arrangement.

Henry Mancini's *Moment to Moment* has been interpreted in recent years by Jimmy Cobb, Roy Hargrove, Eric Alexander (on *Second Milestone*), and Tardo Hammer, Hazeltine's Sharp Nine label mate (on 1999's *Hammer Time*). This G minor version has a soulful, down- and-out quality. It begins in a 12/8 feel but settles into a deep 4/4 groove for the solos. Hazeltine's crafty eight-bar interlude begins and ends the arrangement and launches the blowing. In the fourth bar of the form, a darkly voiced Eb minor chord creates tension—and the trio knows exactly how to milk it.

Bill Evans played Johnny Mandel's ***A Time for Love*** on his 1969 solo album, *Alone*, a crucial text for Hazeltine, whose own version is a waltz: "I wanted to play something in three, and I thought that would take me away from Bill's version. It seems to lie nicely there. But I used some of Bill's changes, like going to D major [in the key of Bb] at the end the first A."

Somewhere is, of course, from "West Side Story," the Bernstein/Sondheim masterpiece, which has become something of a jazz touchstone. Hazeltine premiered this arrangement on Steve Davis's *Vibe Up!* album, but he also points to the ornate ballad version on Lee Morgan's long-lost Blue Note session *Standards* (featuring the same rhythm section as Herbie Hancock's *Speak Like a Child*). In Hazeltine's reading, the melody unfolds in a complex rhythmic framework. The solos are double-timed, but only in the A sections. Hazeltine takes flight.

To conclude, Hazeltine plays an impeccably hip R&B tune by the Isley Brothers, ***For the Love of You***. His arrangement is a bit faster but more or less straightforward, with a few harmonic twists (including transposition down a whole-step from the original key). "I got married young, at 22, and my ex-wife was a big Isley Brothers fan. At first I thought I'd make this version sort of like 'Poinciana.' It didn't come out that way, but it's in that family."

By the way, in late 2003 DreamWorks released an album called *Here I Am: Ron Isley Sings Burt Bacharach*, with both artists' smiling faces on the cover. So we see that it isn't David Hazeltine bringing Isley and Bacharach together; Isley and Bacharach are doing it themselves. What Hazeltine is picking up on, and elucidating with *Modern Standards*, is perhaps a sort of common ancestry in all the material. He's also weighing in on the question of what makes a standard a standard. The question itself is perpetually modern.

—David Adler

David Adler writes for *Jazz Times*, *The New Republic Online* and other publications.

