

HAROLD MABERN piano  
ERIC ALEXANDER tenor saxophone NAT REEVES bass JIMMY COBB drums  
FREDDIE HENDRIX trumpet (tracks 3, 4 & 7)  
CYRO BAPTISTA percussion (track 1)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 To Love and Be Loved 5:38<br>Jimmy Van Heusen / Sammy Cahn                      | 6 The Iron Man 9:12<br>Eric Alexander         |
| 2 If There Is Someone Lovelier<br>Than You 5:22<br>Arthur Schwartz / Howard Dietz | 7 So What 7:11<br>Miles Davis                 |
| 3 The Gigolo 6:11<br>Lee Morgan   | 8 I Get a Kick Out of You 6:57<br>Cole Porter |
| 4 Inner Glimpse 5:29<br>McCoy Tyner   | 9 Dat Dere (solo piano) 5:29<br>Bobby Timmons |
| 5 My Funny Valentine 6:44<br>Richard Rodgers / Lorenz Hart                        | 10 Hittin' the Jug 6:25<br>Gene Ammons        |

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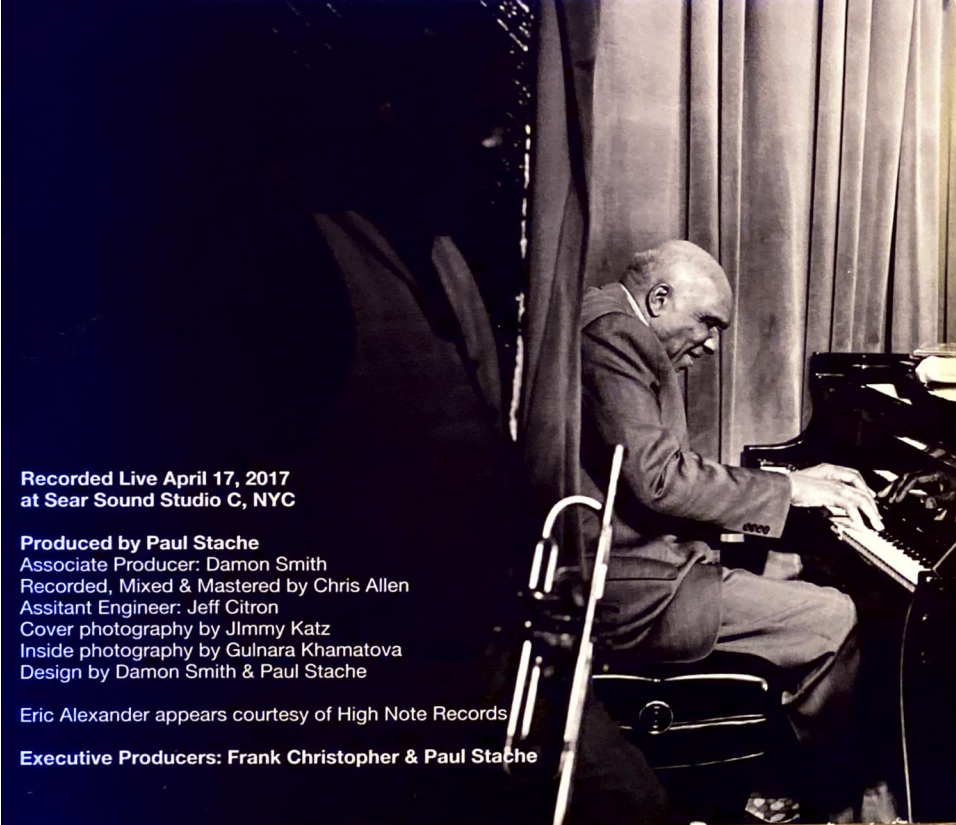
To Love and Be Loved

Harold Mabern

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ERIC ALEXANDER NAT REEVES JIMMY COBB + FREDDIE HENDRIX CYRO BAPTISTA

To Love and Be Loved



**Recorded Live April 17, 2017  
at Sear Sound Studio C, NYC**

**Produced by Paul Stache**  
Associate Producer: Damon Smith  
Recorded, Mixed & Mastered by Chris Allen  
Assitant Engineer: Jeff Citron  
Cover photography by Jimmy Katz  
Inside photography by Gulnara Khamatova  
Design by Damon Smith & Paul Stache

Eric Alexander appears courtesy of High Note Records

**Executive Producers: Frank Christopher & Paul Stache**



In my years teaching jazz history in New York, I'd always require my undergraduates to go hear live jazz in the city and write about their experience. One of the better students, not a music major or even really a jazz fan, chose to go hear Harold Mabern at Smoke. While sitting at the bar, he overheard a detailed and animated conversation and became absorbed in it. When the musicians took to the bandstand, he was surprised to learn that it was Mabern himself who'd been next to him all along. This intensified his focus on the music, on the message being conveyed by this authoritative pianist, a man who encapsulates so much of the history of modern jazz. The student wrote the following in response: "Mabern is a walking philosophy in an organic body, and his existence forces you to examine your own. Am I living with that passion? Am I doing what I love and putting all my life into it? How could it be that a man of that age can produce such a powerful atmosphere of youth?"

How could it be indeed. At 81, Mabern is energized and devoted to passing the torch, connecting a new generation of musicians to the legacies of the masters. *On To Love and Be Loved*, his third outing on the Smoke Sessions label, the Memphis native and New Yorker since 1959 heads a lineup with two of his former students at William Paterson University: tenor saxophonist Eric Alexander and (on three tracks) trumpeter Freddie Hendrix. On drums is the great Jimmy Cobb, age 88, whose

celebrated tenure with Miles Davis overlapped with Mabern's briefer but notable one in 1963. (Mabern, George Coleman and Ron Carter completed the lineup on Davis's West Coast tour, including a stint at the famed Blackhawk.)

"No offense to anyone but Eric is the best student I've had in 36 years," Mabern remarks of his frequent collaborator. "We planned to record as a quartet but Freddie came and sat in the weekend before at Smoke and we wanted him on the recording also. He did me proud. When I taught Freddie, he graded himself. You know what the students' capabilities are after the first day, really after the first solo. And, when I heard Freddie play I said, 'Ok.' Eric and him have great tone quality, technique, and facility because they've listened to the people that came before them."

Of bassist Nat Reeves, Mabern offers: "I've been playing a lot with Nat for the last 10-12 years, in the States, in Japan. We've got quite a rapport. It's wonderful because Jimmy Cobb can play with any bass player and Nat can play with any drummer—especially Nat because he has such a beautiful, solid beat. So they both hooked up because they believe in swingin'. As opposed to laying back, they play right on the beat. It was a perfect combination."

While *Right on Time* showcased Mabern in a forceful trio setting and *Afro Blue* tapped into his rich history of accompanying singers, *To*

*Love and Be Loved* locates its inspiration in repertoire, touching on key associations in Mabern's career and highlighting his interpretive brilliance on a range of incisive material. The leadoff title track, a Cahn/Van Heusen number from the 1958 film *Some Came Running* (starring Sinatra, Dean Martin, Shirley MacLaine), becomes "a medium uptempo samba-slash-bossa nova" in Mabern's words. Guest percussionist Cyro Baptista locks in the groove and adds textural mystique. "I always reflect on what Albert Einstein once said, that imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited, imagination circles the world. I think of one man in particular, Mr. Ahmad Jamal, because he uses his imagination to rearrange for example 'Poinciana,' which has been a hit for the last 60 years."

"If There Is Someone Lovelier Than You," by Dietz/Schwartz, is known to Coltrane enthusiasts from the 1958 Prestige session *Settin' the Pace* with Red Garland, Paul Chambers and Art Taylor. Mabern recorded it as a sideman on Alexander's 1998 release *Heavy Hitters*, and here it returns with those roles reversed. "The Gigolo," from Lee Morgan's 1965 recording of the same name (unreleased until 1968), gets a similarly faithful treatment and harks back to Mabern's superb playing on the original.

"I wish I had enough adjectives to describe how Lee Morgan treated me—better than a brother," Mabern recalls. "He never believed in cliques.

I met him in '56 when he was with Dizzy Gillespie's big band in Chicago and he was very receptive to me then. I remember when we were doing *Dippin'*, Hank Mobley's album, and Lee was like a little kid. He said, 'Ooh, Alfred, listen to Mabern comp! I want Mabern on my next date!' The date he was talking about was *The Gigolo*, one of my favorites because it's my only time recording with Wayne Shorter." It was Hendrix, Mabern notes, who wrote out the tenor counter-line—one of the nicest compositional features in the tune—for Alexander to play.

McCoy Tyner used to take "Inner Glimpse" at tempos that ranged from reasonably bright to rocket-ship fast. Mabern puts it somewhere in between here and features the band at an incendiary level. The historical connection is strong: Tyner was the first pianist in the Art Farmer-Benny Golson Jazztet, followed by Cedar Walton and then Mabern. Tyner and Mabern also used to share bills at Birdland: Tyner with Coltrane's quartet, Mabern with vocalists ranging from Betty Carter to Johnny Hartman to Etta Jones. "McCoy is a true innovative piano genius," Mabern declares, "and 'Inner Glimpse' is a beautiful piece of music. There's not a lot of chords but it makes so much sense, so I've been feeling comfortable playing it."

There's obviously a Miles Davis association with "My Funny Valentine," but it's also simply one of Mabern's favorite ballads, by his favorite composer Richard Rodgers. "So What" is the more

direct homage to Miles, an effective feature for Reeves on a tune that Mabern used to play live with the Prince of Darkness himself. Alexander's "The Iron Man," a swinging blues with a bridge, takes its title from one of Mabern's nicknames. And "Dat Dere" has served Mabern as a solo piano feature for years, as far back as his 1984 album *Joy Spring*. "Bobby Timmons was very bluesy in the way he played and composed, plus he could play stride and all that stuff, so he's really been one of my main influences."

In his rendering of Cole Porter's "I Get a Kick Out of You," Mabern shakes up the form, starting with the verse, going straight to the bridge and then finally the "I get a kick" A section — a roadmap to challenge even the best soloist. "A prime example of Einstein's take on imagination," Mabern quips. There's something simpler but equally deep going on in "Hittin' the Jug," Gene Ammons' classic slow blues: it's originally in B-flat but Mabern and the band take it down to G, on Alexander's suggestion. "I said that's no problem," Mabern comments, "because on the piano, unless you're somebody like Richard Tee who can play A and E and all that, G is the blues key—after hours, key of G."

It's worth noting that the variety of tunes on *To Love and Be Loved* reflects Mabern's versatility, a quality that's proved indispensable through the decades. "As a pianist you've got to learn how to play like everybody," he says. "A singer might say, 'Can you give me a little bit of Erroll

Garner?' You don't have the luxury of saying, 'That ain't my style, baby!' You better learn the style. It used to be you had to play blues joints, you had to play cha cha chas, you had to play with a big band. When I played with Joe Newman and Budd Johnson and Papa Jo Jones, I didn't play the way I would play behind a George Coleman or Sonny Rollins. I knew how to play basic Great American Songbook, 'Blue Lou' and all of that. The older guys knew all the tunes — tunes that you couldn't jive, if you played the wrong melody they'd say, 'C'mon, young talent, that's not it!' So doing all of that prepared me. Even though, believe it or not, 57 years later, I'm still trying to prepare myself, because every day you go out, every bandstand you get on, you can learn something if you keep your ears open."

DAVID R. ADLER  
New York, June 2017

I would hereby like to dedicate this music to the memory of my late wife Beatrice Mabern for all of her support during our time together. Also, my thanks to the late great Lee Morgan for all of his faith in my talent and to Frank Strozier for motivating me all these years. Lastly, my sincere thanks to the wonderful musicians on this new recording.