

Miles Davis - So What ?

Written by bluesever

Saturday, 19 February 2011 17:34 - Last Updated Tuesday, 17 March 2015 17:54

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An old joke, but one worth hearing again: *A rabid jazz lover dies and goes to heaven, where St. Peter leads him into a club where Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, Duke Ellington and Lester Young are on the bandstand. Over in the corner stands a nattily dressed man clutching a trumpet, his back to the audience. "Who's that?" queries the fan. "Oh," says St. Peter. "That's just God. He's pretending he's Miles Davis."*

So What ?

Kind of Blue is a jazz album that has transcended the genre of jazz and become one of a handful of recordings whose very existence changes everything. That Miles Davis achieved this more than once in his career serves as evidence to even the most casual observer of jazz that he was one of its mystics, its visionaries.



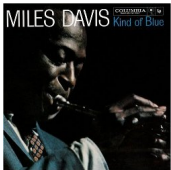
Miles Davis, artwork by Michael Symonds

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As pointed out by Ashley Kahn in the excellent book 'Kind of Blue: The Making of the Miles Davis Masterpiece', *"Copies of the album are passed to friends and given to lovers. The album has sold millions of copies around the world, making it the best-selling recording in Miles Davis's catalog and the best-selling classic jazz album ever (...) Significantly, a large number of those copies were purchased in the past five years, and undoubtedly not just by old-timers replacing worn vinyl: Kind of Blue is even casting its spell on a younger audience more accustomed to the loud-and-fast esthetic of rock and rap."*



Kind of Blue, album

The album is listened to by Clint Eastwood's cool, brooding Secret Service agent in Line of Fire. It also casts a kind of Zen calmness, perhaps due in part to mythology and the enigmatic liner notes written by pianist Bill Evans.

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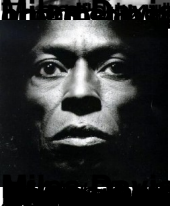
Miles Davis brought together some of the greatest jazz musicians in history: John Coltrane, Herbie Hancock, Bill Evans, Cannonball Adderley, and Jimmy Cobb.



So What is a modal jazz piece, meaning it is based on modes rather than chords. It is a landmark recording in the history of jazz.



Miles Davis was a pioneer in the use of modes in jazz. He was one of the first to use modes in a serious way, and his album So What is a prime example of this.



by Miles Davis



Miles Davis