

AN INTERVIEW WITH McCOY TYNER

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Interview with pianist and composer McCoy Tyner, following a concert at the Unicorn nightclub (formerly of New York). Tyner had just 3 weeks before completed recording of his classic album with strings, 'Fly With the Wind.'

I GUESS THE QUESTION TO ASK IS HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO MODERN JAZZ?

I feel good about it. The fact that people recognize that I've done a little bit for music. I feel good about it. I don't feel bad!

I really didn't set out to do anything in particular except to play good.

YOU'RE YOUNG. DO YOU FEEL SATISFIED, BEING YOUNG, HAVING MADE THE SUCCESS THAT YOU'VE MADE?

Well, it's a funny thing. You know, I really didn't set out to do anything in particular except to play good. And this is something that I always wanted to do. And the repercussions from that, or the benefits from that, I accept gracefully. Because I really had no intentions of wanting recognition or anything else, you know. I just wanted to play. To play good for people and to play good for the people I was working for. I think this has been my main ambition, you know.

WHAT IS IT THAT YOU THINK YOU'VE DONE?

(Laughs) Well, I think that if nothing I've made a few people happy, you know, who listen to music. They seem to enjoy it, and I think this is the main purpose. You know, some people come up to me and they thank me. And I wonder, I say, what are you thanking me for? I guess they're thanking me because I've added something to their lives. And I think that's nice to add something to somebody's life, instead of subtracting something, you know? I always feel as though, if I can add instead of subtract, then I'm doing something worthwhile. I think that's important.

IN DOING WHAT YOU'RE DOING, ARE YOU TRYING INTENTIONALLY TO TAKE JAZZ SOMEWHERE?

No, I'm not trying intentionally. I think I'm just trying to more or less find out more about what I have to say musically. And if that happens to take somebody somewhere, then good. But I'm not trying to take anybody anyplace! I'm just trying to find out more about what is there in this thing called music. You know. It's a very beautiful thing too!

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I'm not satisfied. I think I'd like to continue to move forward, you know, as best I can. I don't mean frantically. I mean just to move.

YOU'VE SEEN A LOT OF VARIETY. YOU'VE PLAYED WITH ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE. ITS A HARD QUESTION TO ASK, BUT IF YOU HAD YOUR CHOICE, WOULD YOU STAY WHERE YOU ARE RIGHT NOW MUSICALLY, WOULD YOU GO BACK TO A PHASE THAT YOU PLAYED BEFORE A FEW YEARS AGO... ARE YOU SATISFIED NOW WITH YOUR MUSIC?

No, I'm not satisfied. I think I'd like to continue to move forward, you know, as best I can. I don't mean frantically. I mean just to move. Whatever. And in whatever direction that I hear. It's hard to pinpoint where, you know. You just go wherever things happen to strike you. You go in that direction. And I don't know where that is; it's hard to predict where that's going to be! You just keep trying, that's all.

DO YOU THINK YOU TAKE YOUR MUSIC FROM ANYONE IN PARTICULAR?

No, I take my music from many things. Hopefully, it comes mainly from me. But I think, being human, we're influenced by a lot of different things. Things around us, other people. I listen to a lot of music from different parts of the world. And that's nice. It's inspiring to hear, because it means something; the music is very old and it means a lot to people of that particular area, and I listen to it and see if I can find something of value there for me.

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THE MUSIC THAT YOU PLAYED TONIGHT. SOME PEOPLE CONSIDER IT UNCONTROLLED, AND SOME PEOPLE CONSIDER IT A LITTLE BIT OBNOXIOUS. BUT I HAD TO NOTICE THAT IF ANYONE WAS HOLDING IT UNDER CONTROL, IT WAS YOU AT THE PIANO. YOU HAVE A LOT OF CONTROL ON THE KEYBOARD. THAT COMES FROM EXPERIENCE, OF COURSE. BUT IS IT AN INTENTIONAL TYPE OF THING THAT YOU CONTROL THE MUSIC AS YOU DO?

No. I think it's good to have some discipline in everything. Otherwise, if you have no guidelines, you can't really accomplish as much as you'd like to. You should have some sort of discipline.

HOW ABOUT THE MUSIC AROUND YOU NOW? DO YOU THINK THERE'S DISCIPLINE IN WHAT'S GOING ON WITH OTHER GROUPS? THE MUSIC TODAY HAS BEEN COMPARED TO A TORNADO; IT'S JUST GOING AROUND AND AROUND AND NOT REALLY DOING ANYTHING.

I don't know. I can't really comment honestly about that. You know, I don't like to comment on someone else's music. *(Laughs)* I really don't.

I don't like to comment on someone else's music.

LET ME JUST ASK YOU – YOU'RE PROBABLY ASKED ALOT OF DIFFERENT QUESTIONS BY ALOT OF DIFFERENT PEOPLE. IS THERE ANY ONE PARTICULAR QUESTION THAT YOU EVER WANTED SOMEONE TO ASK YOU?

(Laughs) Well, I never really thought of it in that way! You know? Because alot of people have asked me different questions, and I haven't thought of any one particular question that I'd like someone to ask me. Because I think most of the questions that have been asked me, at least most of the intelligent questions, have been good. I've been able to answer them to the best of my ability and I think that's about it. I can't think of one particular question...*(Laughs)*

OK, MAYBE WHAT MEANT BY THAT... IS THERE ANYTHING THAT YOU'D WANT TO TELL PEOPLE?

Well, I'd like to tell people to try to keep listening to good music and to keep themselves at least open for things, for good things. Because there are still some things of quality left in the world, hopefully.

WHERE ARE YOU GOING NOW?

I'm going back home.

WHERE'S HOME?

New Jersey. Take a little rest. I could use it. We've been out for 8 days, but we've been moving. You know, 3 days here, 2 days there. What I'm thinking about now, is kind of like, you know, hang it up for a minute, take a little rest.

***Strings. I did some writing.
Someone will like it.***

YOU SAID THAT YOU'D RECORDED AN ALBUM. WHEN WAS THAT?

About three weeks ago. It's a string thing. Strings. I did some writing. Someone will like it.
(Laughs)

OK. THANKS AN AWFUL LOT FOR YOUR TIME.

That's alright.