

**The**  
**PIANO**  
**of**  
**JOE ALBANY**  
**“JOSEPH ALBANI”**

Solographer: Jan Evensmo  
Last update: March 26, 2020

Born: Atlantic City, New Jersey, Jan. 24, 1924  
Died: New York, Jan. 12, 1988

*Introduction:*

When we heard the Lester Young Aladdin session of 1946, a very interesting piano player appeared. Later we learned that he was one of the legendary personalities of modern jazz piano. Typical candidate for jazz archeology!

*History:*

Studied accordion as a child and took up piano in high school. He moved to the West Coast when he was 17 and in 1942 joined Leo Watson's group, heard Art Tatum, and met Lester Young. After playing with Benny Carter (1943) and Georgie Auld, he met Charlie Parker (New York 1944); the two men lived together and took drugs together. In 1945 Albany worked again with Auld and then performed with Boyd Raeburn. In 1946 he played with Parker in Los Angeles, but was dismissed owing to an argument; the same year he recorded four years with Young, and his reputation rested on these alone until a recording of a rehearsal with Warne Marsh was issued in 1957. In the late fifties he wrote songs for Anita O'Day, and in 1963 played with Charles Mingus at the Village Gate, New York. He lived for a period in Europe, then returned to the USA and played in New York in the late seventies. He was a highly respected musician but rarely heard, because his career was checkered by decades of drug addiction and periods of time spent in prison (ref. The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz).

## JOE ALBANY SOLOGRAPHY

### **GEORGIE AULD & HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. May 24, 1945**

Al Porcino, Al Aarons, Art House, Danny Blue (tp), Rudy DeLuca, Al Esposito, Mike Datz (tb), Georgie Auld (sop, as, ts, vo), Musky Ruffo, Gene Zanoni (as), Herman Rubenstein, Jack Schwartz (ts), Serge Chaloff (bar), Joe Albany (p), Turk Van Lake (g, arr), Iggy Shevack (b), Stan Levey (dm), Tadd Dameron, Budd Johnson (arr).

Four titles were recorded for Musicraft, no piano audible on 574-B "Stompin' At The Savoy" and 576-A1 "Daily Double" but:

573-B	Honey	Intro 4 bars. (M)
575-1	Jump, Georgie, Jump	Soli 8 and 4 bars. (M)

Joe Albany's first appearance is not very exciting. Some chording on "Jump ..." may be noted.

### **CHARLIE PARKER QUINTET** **L.A. Feb./March 1946**

Miles Davis (tp), Charlie Parker (as), Joe Albany (p), Addison Farmer (b), Chuck Thompson (dm).

Broadcast from the "Finale Club":

5:09	Blue 'N' Boogie	Solo 36 bars. Acc. (b) 24 bars. (FM)
2:48	Anthropology	Solo 32 bars. (FM)
5:15	Ornithology (NC)	Intro 4 bars. Solo 64 bars. (FM)
3:44	Billie's Bounce	Intro 4 bars. Solo 60 bars. (FM)
5:08	All The Things You Are	Acc. (as/tp). Solo 36 bars. (SM)

Preceding the famous and earopening Pres session, this is one of the great and highly valuable pre-Camarillo Bird broadcasts. As mentioned in the history section above, Charlie Parker and Joe Albany were close friends, and therefore it is a jazz archeological treasure that we can hear them together this one time. The sound quality is not so bad under the circumstances. There is plenty of space for piano soli, and one can only marvel by their originality. I suggest you play the Pres session first to get into the right attention and mood, and then enjoy these five items. JA obviously prefers the instrument's middle and lower parts, giving his soli a solemn, heavy and bluesy touch but always with new and exciting ideas. All these items belong to jazz history and should be listened to carefully, but spend some extra time with "... Bounce" and "Anthropology".

### **LESTER YOUNG & HIS BAND** **L.A. ca. Aug. 1946**

Lester Young (ts), Joe Albany (p), Irving Ashby (elg), Red Callender (b), Chico Hamilton (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Aladdin:

You're Driving Me Crazy	Solo 16 bars. (SM)
New Lester Leaps In	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
Lester's Be Bop Boogie	Solo 12 bars. Acc. (b). (M)
She's Funny That Way	Intro 4 bars. Acc. (ts). Coda. (S)

This session is the basis for this solography! Digging all Pres we could get, we stumbled over this session, discovering that it contained also a very original and exciting piano player. Nobody else played like this in 1946! Take his solo on "... Crazy" and hear how he lets the first bar just go by until he strikes with his own unique interpretation! Fascinating soli also on "... Leaps In" and "... Be Bop ...". Finally a brilliant slow intro on "... Funny ..." and dig also how he comps his president.

### **JERRY WALD** **NYC. 1952**

Al Derisi, Nick Capezuto, Bob Funk, Ziggy Schatz (tp), Jack Hitchcock, Jim Knapp (tb), Jerry Wald (cl), Sam Zittman, Charlie Kennedy (as), Eddie Wasserman (ts), George Berg, Pete Mondello (bar), Joe Albany (p), unknown (b), Artie Anton (dm).

Unknown titles, no info.

### **JOE ALBANY** **Long Beach, Ca., Sept. 1957**

Warne Marsh (ts), Joe Albany (p), Bob Whitlock (b), Ralph Garretson (dm).

Seven titles were recorded for Riverside in the living room of sound engineer Ralph Garretson, issued as "The Right Combination". JA is heard all the way

through, accompanying tenorsax and bass, and for simplicity only the pure solo features are listed below:

Daahoud	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (FM)
Angel Eyes	Intro 4 bars to solo 64 bars. (S)
I Love You	Solo 6 choruses of 32 bars. (M)
Body And Soul	Solo 64 bars. (SM). Solo 112 bars. (F)
It's You Or No One	Intro 4 bars. Solo 64 bars. (FM)
All The Things You Are	Solo 2 choruses of 36 bars. (SM)
The Nearness Of You	Solo 36 bars. (S)

Ten years have passed since JA was heard last time, and then he is offered a living room as his recording studio! Well, it is not as bad as it sounds, being only a trio and a competent producer, the sound results are pretty good. The music is something else again. Noting that Warne Marsh is one of the most original and exciting of the early modern white tenor saxophonist, this opens for some close interaction, which we really get. To be quite honest, if this had been JA's only appearance, he would still have been legendary! This is jazz piano on a very high level on all titles, but taking "Angel Eyes" as a close study object, it is evident that JA belongs to the jazz greats, brilliantly played! He has his ways of creating excitement, mostly in the middle half of the piano and deeper but ventures upwards once in awhile. Slower tempi are perhaps the most immediately attractive, but dig his fast section on "... Soul", closely cooperating with the bass player, wow!! And his very long solo on "I Love You" are one of the high points of the date. No more talk, this a session you must dig into, if you are interested in modern jazz piano!!

**WARNE MARSH QUARTET** Dana Point, Ca., Oct. 7, 1957  
 Warne Marsh (ts), Joe Albany (p), Bob Whitlock (b), Red Martinson (dm).  
 Eighteen titles were recorded live in the "Galleon Room", issued on V.S.O.P. CD 112 (as for the above session, only soli are listed, backing of (ts) and (b) omitted for practical purposes):

4:22	The Things I Love	Solo 16 bars. (S)
6:44	Dahoud	Soli 64, 4 and 4 bars. (FM)
4:12	Now's The Time	Soli 12 and 24 bars. (M)
6:16	Billie's Bounce	Intro 8 bars. Soli 4 and 3 choruses of 12 bars. (M)
9:25	Body And Soul	Solo 32 bars. (S). Solo 64 bars. (M)
7:12	Limehouse Blues	Intro 8 bars. Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (FM)
6:20	Love Is Here To Stay	Intro 4 bars. Solo 64 bars. (SM)
5:50	I've Got You Under My Skin	Solo 2 choruses of 56 bars. (FM)
5:12	Once In Awhile	Intro. Solo 32 bars. (S)
4:46	Night And Day	Strong acc. (FM)
7:35	My Little Suede Shoes	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (M)
4:58	Darn That Dream	Intro. Solo 32 bars. (S)
3:30	After You've Gone	Intro 8 bars. Solo 24 bars (NC). (FM)
4:32	Easy To Love	Solo 32 bars. (SM)
5:48	'S Wonderful	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (FM)
5:21	Tea For Two	Soli 32 and 32 bars. (FM)
5:17	The Song Is You	Intro 4 bars. Solo 2 choruses of 64 bars. (FM)
6:45	The Way You Look Tonight	Intro 4 bars. Solo 2 choruses of 64 bars. (F)

How should one comment a marathon session of more than 1 ½ hours? Having such a highly sophisticated but introvert quartet? Maybe the only sensible way is just to inform you that the session exists. I found it just by coincidence on Spotify, it did not appear in my discographies, and there it was, a gold mine of

jazz piano, and an exciting session as such! Maybe a warning is in place; the music is pretty demanding, and you have to be more than average interested to digest all what WM and his group is doing. Just go ahead and pick some of the tunes you like and get going!! But it should not hurt, if you choose a new version of "... Soul", or "Once ..." or "... Dream" as some of your starting items ...

**JOE ALBANY TRIO****El Monte, Ca., Feb. 23, 1958**

Joe Albany (p), (b), (dm).

Eight titles recorded at Club Caprice, unissued, James Accardi collection:

5:33	When Lights Are Low	(SM)
3:09	Airegin	(F)
4:28	Now's The Time	(M)
3:58	Polka Dots And Moonbeams	(S)
4:04	Jordu	(FM)
0:55	Blues	(SM)
4:08	I'll Remember April	(F)
2:09	Autumn In New York (NC)	(S)

Postscript of March 26, 2020: This session seems to be the first one preserved where JA plays with trio. There is a lot of excellent and original piano playing here; my favourite is his surprising way to treat "... The Time", and it is just too bad that the delightful "Autumn ..." is cut short. A valuable discovery!

**RALPH PENNA****Hollywood, Oct. 25, 1961**

Herb Geller (as-except item 5), Joe Albany (p), Ralph Penna (b).

Five titles were issued as "Master Of The Bass":

8:04	Birdtown Birds	Intro 4 bars. Acc. (as). Solo 64 bars. Acc. (b). Acc. (as). (FM)
6:48	Dewey Square	Intro. Acc. (as). Solo 8+64 bars. Acc. (b). Acc. (as). Coda. (FM)
6:08	While A Cigarette Was Burning	Intro 4 bars. Acc. (as). Solo 68 bars. Acc. (b). Acc. (as). (M)
5:23	Cheryl	Acc. (as). Solo 5 choruses of 12 bars. Acc. (b). Acc. (as). (FM)
4:42	Old Old Friends	Intro 2 bars to solo 72 bars to coda. (S)

Excellent trio session, with the great Herb Geller in front, more conventional than the previous ones with Warne Marsh. This also goes for the piano playing which nevertheless is excellent, take for instance "... Square" where bad planning makes some confusion before JA really takes off. Or his original blues playing on "Cheryl". But maybe the highlight is the lovely slow ballad performance "... Friends", only a great piano player can deliver music like this!

Note: "Airegin" from the same CD is supposed to be duo Pete Jolly (p), Ralph Penna (b), but it also has Herb Geller (as) playing all the way through, so I wonder if it possibly could be from the session above, thus a sixth title:

2:48	Airegin	Acc. (as). (F)
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**JOE ALBANY TRIO****Burbank & LA. March 15/16, 1966**

Joe Albany (p), Leroy Vinnegar (b), Frank Capp (dm).

Nine titles were issued on Fresh Sound, issued as "Portrait Of A Legend":

4:09	Barbados	(M)
3:18	Bluebird	(M)
4:20	Little Suede Shoes	(FM)
5:19	There Is No Greater Love	(M)
2:58	Au Privave	(F)
3:33	Lush Life	(S)
3:53	A. B. Blues	(S)
3:44	Old Friends	(S)

3:30 Woody'n You (FM)

We are already twenty years from the Pres-session, and five years since the last session, and time has come for his first 'normal' trio session. Except for some fine bass and drum soli, JA swings the whole date. His style is not very much different from before, a rather hard approach with a predominance for the left half of the piano. Some of the items are too short, it would have been interesting to have him developing his creative ideas further. The longest item "... Love" is one of my favourite items, and the fast "Au ..." shows that he masters uptempi. Other remarkable items are the highly dramatic, energetic, slow and solitary "Lush ...", "... Blues" and "... Friends", certainly something different from the main road!

**JOE ALBANY**

**Hollywood, Ca., Aug. 31, 1971**

Joe Albany (p).

Six titles issued as "Joe Albany At Home", 1822 Wilton Place:

4:37	What's New?	(S)
3:52	You're Blasé	(S)
4:10	Why Was I Born?	(SM)
4:08	Jitterbug Waltz	(SM)
4:12	Night And Day	(SM)
4:05	What Are You Doing The Rest Of Your Life?	(S)

**Hollywood, Ca., Sept. 5, 1971**

Same. Six titles:

2:19	Barbados	(M)
3:41	Can't We Be Friends	(SM)
3:40	Everything Happens To Me	(S)
3:43	You've Changed	(S)
2:01	Birdtown Birds	(FM)
3:19	Isn't It Romantic?	(S)

Another five years, and here JA is here again, recording himself at home, with good sound. Quoting Mark Gardner's liner notes: "Certainly, Joe Albany listened to Art Tatum and Bud Powell in his formative years and their influence is quite apparent. However, he never became bogged down by pointless imitation and from this his own highly personal and unique style has evolved. It is melodically and harmonically mature and, even in a solo recital of this nature which places such a heavy burden on the pianist, his lines exhibit tremendous rhythmic vitality". Yes, this is lovely piano music, almost everything in quite slow tempi, his approach at the same time dreamlike and hard. For highlights try "... You Doing ..." and "... Changed".

Joe Albany continues to appear on recording sessions more or less irregularly until 1982.

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