

# Paolo Fresu

At this year's edition of the Umbria Jazz Winter festival in Orvieto, Italy, DownBeat invited trumpeter Paolo Fresu to the stage of the Palazzo del Popolo to take the Blindfold Test, which gave him the opportunity to not only weigh in on the music but also to tell stories. (The translator was Enzo Capua.) One of Italy's most highly esteemed jazz artists, Fresu drew 400 people to the event. Later at the festival, he played two spirited concerts with his Devil Quartet and offered his Chet Baker tribute show, "Tempo di Chet."

## Enrico Rava

"Overboard" (*TATI*, ECM, 2005) Rava, trumpet; Stefano Bollani, piano; Paul Motian, drums.

[immediately] Enrico Rava. It's Stefano Bollani, too. Enrico's sound is amazing. It's personal. It's like Miles and Chet. You hear one note and you know who it is. Enrico's sound is first. It's the most important thing, especially for a trumpet player. The music is inside and the trumpet tells the story to the audience. Enrico plays the melody perfectly clear. I know this album. But I also know *all* the music Enrico has recorded. I know this past, in the '80s, Enrico was the father of all Italian trumpet players.

## Louis Armstrong & Duke Ellington

"The Beautiful American" (*The Great Summit: The Master Takes*, Roulette Jazz/Blue Note, 2000, rec'd 1961) Armstrong, trumpet; Ellington, piano; Trummy Young, trombone; Barney Bigard, clarinet; Mort Hebert, bass; Danny Barcelona, drums.

That sounds like Louis. I never heard this song. The piano player is a basic player, but he sounds fantastic with the sound and the economy. Is it Duke Ellington? He was clear and somehow perfect. Duke on the piano is the conductor. The music sounds very modern with that swing. And Louis' swing was incredible.

It's amazing that he was also an incredible singer. If you look back into the history of jazz, a lot of trumpeters were also singers—Clark Terry, Chet, Dizzy, Don Cherry. I think it's because the trumpet makes a connection with the voice. The instrument puts out melodic lines like a singer. And Louis was the greatest.

## Terence Blanchard Featuring The E Collective

"Compared To What" (*Breathless*, Blue Note, 2015) Blanchard, trumpet; Fabian Almazan, piano; Charles Altura, guitar; Donald Ramsey, bass; Oscar Seaton, drums.

The sound of the trumpeter is like Miles playing the wah-wah. I don't think so, but is this Randy Brecker? Whoever this is, he's an amazing player. Is the player American? I don't know. [An audience member guesses.] Wow, Terence Blanchard is one of my favorite trumpet players, but I know more of his acoustic hard-bop material. I don't know his electric music. The tempo of this is incredible. It's a nice way to hear new music for the trumpet.

## Chet Baker

"Alone Together" (*Chet—Riverside Jazz Classics*, Riverside/Fantasy, 2002, rec'd 1959) Baker, trumpet; Pepper Adams, baritone saxophone; Herbie Mann, flute; Bill Evans, piano; Paul Chambers, bass; Connie Kay, drums.

It's Chet, of course, but he's playing "Alone Together" in a different way. And I like how he's interacting with Pepper [Adams]. We can speak for hours about Chet Baker. Everything is perfect in his music, despite the strangeness in his life. Every note is the best one. If you listen to his solos, it's as if he's singing.

I have a great story about Chet. It was 1983. I was very young and playing at the Sanremo Music Festival, where Chet and his band were



also playing. Our concert went well, and after we were done at the stage at the Sanremo Casino, I saw a man walk to me from the dark part of the hall. And the person was Chet, and I thought, "Oh, no." Very slowly he came to me and said, "Complimente. I heard your version of 'Round Midnight,' and I liked it very much." And then he just disappeared back into the dark. It was like a movie. We've heard stories about Chet with his musicians and especially his drummers. But he was so gentlemanly with me. So, this is a blessed story.

## Miles Davis

"Maze" (*Rubberband*, Warner Bros./Rhino 2019, rec'd 1986) Davis, trumpet; Bob Berg, saxophone; Mike Stern, guitar; Robert Irving III, synthesizers; Angus Thomas, bass; Vince Wilburn Jr., drums; Marilyn Mazur, Steve Thornton, percussion.

It's Miles, of course. This sounds like it was around *We Want Miles* and *Star People*. Miles was my mentor, my inspiration. I grew up in Sardinia. My family was very poor, and my father worked in the country as a shepherd. I just had a little cassette player and a radio. I was very young when I heard Miles for the first time on the radio. Who is this? I had never heard the technique he played on the trumpet.

When I was a little older, I was in a band with young people and a teacher was teaching us new songs. He loaned us cassettes of music to practice for the next week. One was Miles playing "Autumn Leaves." That was my first lesson with Miles. I ended up spending three months just playing the first 16 bars of Miles' theme, so much so that my mother said, "Paolo, stop." But when Miles started the melody, it was so deep, almost like a voice. When Miles disappeared in the '80s and then came back, the critics were very harsh, saying this is not jazz. But even though it wasn't like what he played early in his career, it was new and you could hear his intelligence. In that way, he was exactly like he had been before.

## Nat Adderley

"Work Song" (*Work Song: Keepnews Collection*, Riverside/Concord Label Group, 2008, rec'd 1960) Adderley, cornet; Wes Montgomery, guitar; Bobby Timmons, piano; Sam Jones, cello; Percy Heath, bass; Louis Hayes, drums.

From the beginning, I thought about Nat Adderley. On the solo, he played like Clark Terry with his choice of notes, but because he was playing cornet, it sounded more groovy, with a fantastic tempo and an incredible swing. The cornet is completely different from a trumpet. This is "Work Song." I like this music and I like Nat, who was not so famous. If you look at the history of great jazz trumpeters, Nat's not there. But he was one of the best ones, for me, who was in the same line from Louis Armstrong to the modern trumpeters.

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The "Blindfold Test" is a listening test that challenges the featured artist to discuss and identify the music and musicians who performed on selected recordings. The artist is then asked to rate each tune using a 5-star system. No information is given to the artist prior to the test.