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[July](#)[June](#)[May](#)[April](#)[March](#)[February](#)[January](#)**ALBUM REVIEW:****Miles Davis (reissue)  
'Round About Midnight****Columbia/Speakers Corner CL 949 180g mono LP**Produced by: **George Avakian**  
Engineered by: **Frank Laico**  
Mixed by: **Frank Laico**  
Mastered by: **Maarten de Boer at UMG Berliner**Review by: Michael Fremer  
2009-04-01

Miles Davis's major label debut, recorded with his quintet in the fall of 1955 and late summer of 1956 while he was still under Prestige contract and released early in 1957, was not particularly well-received at the time, though it has grown considerably in stature since then.

Davis, John Coltrane, Red Garland, Paul Chambers and "Philly Joe" Jones has been together as a group for over a year at this time, working both in the studio and in live performance. Miles had played the title track at Newport in 1955, rebounding from what the liner notes call a "health" problem, but which was an addiction to heroin that he kicked in 1953 or 1954.

The version of the gorgeous, bluesy Monk tune that opens and highlights the album both reprises the pensive, post-Bop sound of the earlier *Birth of the Cool* and was a harbinger of Miles to come. The opening bars, with Coltrane's warm tenor wrapped around Davis's jagged muted trumpet set a sublime tone for the tune and the album.

Though the 30th street studio recording is mono, great depth is produced, with Davis up front and the others cleanly layered behind. The second tune, Charlie Parker's "Ah-Leu-Cha" is more standard uptempo hard-bop and the side closes with a stately version of the cool Cole Porter standard "All of You" that would be equally at home in a supper club as a jazz joint.

Side two opens with a pleasing, smoothly flowing but hardly memorable take on the standard "Bye, Bye Blackbird," with Coltrane hinting at future harmonic and rhythmic strategies in his long, productive solo. Whatever Rudy Van Gelder's legend, capturing a clean piano sound wasn't among his strong suits, especially early on in his long career, so here, Red Garland's piano, recorded by Frank Laico attains a welcome, woody clarity lacking on most of the Prestige Van Gelder sessions.

Compare Garland's coherent, non-boxy sound on the suave, jumpy cover of Tadd Dameron's "Tadd's Delight" to any of the Prestige recordings.

The album ends with a swinging, unusual rendering of a Swedish folk song "Dear Old Stockholm," featuring a nimble, driving Paul Chambers bass solo that's also well recorded, particularly given the year, though otherwise there are hints of overload on a few peaks. Coltrane takes a long squiggly solo and Miles takes the melody back with an uncharacteristically complex muted trumpet solo and conclusion.

The reissue does an excellent job of capturing the original's warm aura, particularly getting right the spacious echo behind Philly Joe's brush work on "Bye Bye Blackbird." The reissue is actually cleaner and more extended than the original and represents more of a clarification of it rather than a revision. Coltrane's sax doesn't quite have the body found on the original but you can't have everything. And you can bet the reissue is quieter than most originals you might find. A nicely done AAA reissue.

a Miles reissue keeper?

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