

# BOBBY ROSE

BY ANDREY HENKIN

During guitarist Jack Wilkins' 70th birthday celebration at Jazz Standard last July, organizer Charles Carlini took a moment to acknowledge the six-string luminaries in attendance. Of the many names he mentioned, one stood out to guitar cognoscenti: Bobby Rose, best known as fellow Philadelphian Pat Martino's foil on *Baiyina* (*The Clear Evidence*) (Prestige, 1968), *Footprints* (Muse, 1972) and HighNote's 2012 release *Alone Together (with Bobby Rose)*, a collection of duo recordings from the late '70s.

As to how he started playing music, Rose recalled, "The second world war was just over, nobody was working, everybody up the street in my neighborhood played the guitar or banjo and they would all come over to my house. They and my father would jam like the whole weekend. That was the atmosphere I grew up in." After playing as a child, he got away from it for a while, picking the guitar back up after being drafted in 1956 and is entirely self-taught. "In Philly, there was always a bar to go to on a Saturday, Sunday afternoon where you could go sit in...and that's where I got a lot of my training, no money, just playing for beers."

Upon coming out of the army, Rose joined the musicians' union and started traveling with different groups, mostly commercial music, and a look through Rose's discography reveals some early rock and folk sessions that predate his jazz work. "That was a very brief period. I was going with the bands that were paying the most money," he admits. But jazz was his main interest. He lists Django Reinhardt ("that's the best guitar duet ever"), Les Paul ("my father's favorite"), Chuck Wayne, Barney Kessel, Charlie Christian, Wes Montgomery and Joe Diorio ("another giant") as his greatest influences.

But despite growing up a couple blocks away from each other in Philadelphia (even having the same barber), Rose, born Dec. 14th, 1937 and Martino, born Aug. 25th, 1944 (as Rosania and Azzara, respectively;

"Nobody liked their last names," Rose quipped), the pair first met when working near each other in Atlantic City in 1964 and made plans to get together back home. "He invited me over his apartment," Rose recalled, "and I stayed most of the night, just hung out talking, played a little bit and we just hit it off. We became friends pretty fast."

A few years later, Rose and Martino would collaborate on *Baiyina* (subtitled *A psychedelic excursion through the magical mysteries of the Koran*), an outlier both in Martino's catalogue and general jazz guitar history. Over a soft bed of bassist Richard Davis, drummer Charli Persip and the tambura of Khalil Balakrishna and tabla of Reggie Ferguson, Martino and Rose played remarkable, raga-inspired doubled melody lines, so in sync that many listeners, this writer included, thought that Bobby Rose was Martino's sly way of overdubbing himself. "It was like that for a while," Rose laughed. "No one was expecting another guitar player on there... I shedded and took a lot of time on it to make it perfect." When asked what inspired such an unusual album, Rose replied, "It had to do with what we were listening to at the time and the kind of drugs we were doing." According to Rose, and contrary to the credits on the album, the music was created collaboratively.

Rose and Martino are still close, Martino back in Philly and Rose in the city's suburbs, seeing each other every couple of months, though there was a long lapse after Martino's infamous aneurysm, which had a wholesale effect on his memory, and Rose's own personal issues. "We parted ways for a few years," Rose remembers. I didn't hear from him for a good eight, nine, ten years. But after he started to heal, and his memory started coming back, then he realized who his friends were." Their long relationship was brought to the fore with *Alone Together*, culled from tapes that Martino had in his archives. It includes, alongside the title standard, fascinating versions of "The Visit" (the alternate title track for a later issue of *Footprints*), Wes Montgomery's "Four On Six", Martino fave "Sunny" and "Israfil", the third track from *Baiyina*. Rose prefers the duet because "I had more control over where everything is going. And I'm so in tune to Pat,

wherever he goes, I'm right there, I'm right behind him, pushing him more." Rose is hopeful that more archival material will be released. "We have a lot of stuff in the can that we recorded at his home studio. And I believe that sooner or later he'll start putting it out. He put one out already so let's see if it goes somewhere."

In addition to his work with Martino, Rose's discography includes albums by Harold Ousley, Roy Ayers, Deodato, Eddie Daniels and soundtrack work on movies as different as *Grease* and *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*. Rose got those opportunities "hanging out in New York. I met a lot of people and they just approached me because I have two different styles. I like to play jazz. I like to play rock... and they gave me a shot."

In 2009, he recorded and self-released *Galaxy*, a series of improvised experimental duets with pianist Ron Thomas (who worked separately with Martino on his 1972 *Live!* album and as sidemen for Eric Kloss' 1972 *One, Two, Free* session). But, unfortunately, Rose hasn't done any live performances in over a decade, exacerbated by a recent diagnosis of Stage 4 lung cancer, the treatment for which has affected his ability to play. "That instrument will kill you," he laments. "If you don't keep up with it. One day you pick it up and you think you can play it and you start to play it and you find out you're not playing shit." But Rose has tentative plans to do another duo album, this time with a well-known guitarist he can't name at this time. "I'm on my way out and I want to leave something behind...it could be six months, it could be six years, it could be six days." ❖

#### Recommended Listening:

- Pat Martino – *Baiyina (The Clear Evidence)* (Prestige, 1968)
- Pat Martino – *The Visit [Footprints]* (Cobblestone-Muse, 1972)
- Roy Ayers – *Coffy* (Polydor, 1972)
- Harold Ousley – *The Kid!* (Cobblestone, 1972)
- Johnny Hartman – *I've Been There* (Perception, 1973)
- Pat Martino – *Alone Together (with Bobby Rose)* (HighNote, 1977-78)

## LEST WE FORGET

# EDDIE HARRIS

BY ANDERS GRIFFEN

There is no forgetting Eddie Harris. Primarily a tenor saxophonist, his sound is immediately recognizable. However, he felt marginalized during his career, evidenced in songs like "Eddie Who?" This may appear surprising given certain facts: he recorded one of the best-selling jazz albums of all time, *Swiss Movement* with Les McCann; recorded the first jazz album to go gold with *Exodus to Jazz*; penned the influential "Freedom Jazz Dance"; wrote and recorded original music for *The Bill Cosby Show*; and is considered one of the great saxophonists of all time. He is also known for explorations with the electric saxophone and inventions of a reed mouthpiece for trumpet and a trombone mouthpiece for saxophone. Sometimes these were critically received as novelties, but the recordings are imbued with vitality and Harris' individual sensibility. But despite his success, he was never quite one of the big names in jazz.

Harris was born in Chicago on Oct. 20th, 1934. As a small child, he sang in church and started learning piano. His voice and piano playing are prominently featured on many recordings. He studied with Captain Walter Dyett, who earned a venerable reputation at

DuSable High School, where his students represent a veritable Who's Who of Chicago jazz musicians. Starting out on vibraphone and studying clarinet before being permitted to play saxophone, he also learned trumpet, trombone and bassoon while continuing his studies at Illinois and Roosevelt Universities. He performed with Gene Ammons before being drafted in the mid '50s and making his way to the 7th Army Symphony Orchestra, which also included Don Ellis, Leo Wright and Cedar Walton. After leaving the service, Harris lived in New York shortly before returning to Chicago.

Signing with Vee Jay Records, Harris achieved great success with his 1961 debut *Exodus to Jazz* and released six more albums by 1963. He recorded for Buddah and Columbia before starting a fruitful, ten-year relationship with Atlantic, during which time he released 23 albums, including *The In Sound* (his first recording of "Freedom Jazz Dance"), *Mean Greens*, *The Electrifying Eddie Harris* (which featured "Listen Here"), *Plug Me In*, *High Voltage* and *Swiss Movement*. All of his recordings demonstrate musical fluency and range steeped in soul. His early success led to his categorization as a 'groove-oriented' and funky player, which was concurrently beneficial and detrimental. The dialogue changes to hardship and humor in the '70s. On the one hand, he enjoyed some commercial success; on the other, the stereotype meant he was not always recognized as a serious artist.

One of the reasons Harris is so easily recognizable is his concept and approach. His propensity to create melodies, written or improvised, out of wider intervals than scale steps is heard throughout his music—"Freedom Jazz Dance" can be heard in 4ths, or may be analyzed as pentatonic thirds while several tunes rely on manual dexterity over relatively simple modal or blues-oriented progressions. Books such as *Interverlistic Concepts* contain his exercises exploring arpeggios and interval patterns gradually extending wider than an octave. These evince an unconventional and intellectually rigorous repertoire.

Harris passed away in Los Angeles Nov. 5th, 1996 at the age of 62 of bone cancer and kidney disease. ❖

For more information, visit [eddieharris.com](http://eddieharris.com). A Harris 80th birthday tribute is at *Smoke* Oct. 24th-26th. See *Calendar*.

#### Recommended Listening:

- Eddie Harris – *Exodus to Jazz* (Vee Jay, 1961)
- Eddie Harris – *The Electrifying Eddie Harris* (Atlantic-Rhino, 1967-68)
- Les McCann/Eddie Harris – *Swiss Movement* (Atlantic, 1969)
- Eddie Harris – *A Tale of Two Cities* (Night-Hyena, 1978/1983)
- Eddie Harris/Ellis Marsalis – *Homecoming* (Spindletop-ELM, 1985)
- John Scofield – *Hand Jive* (Blue Note, 1993)