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Affectionately To Miles

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Affectionately To Miles

Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"It had to be Miles, we both agreed to that. In fact, there had never been any argument. Actually, playing the record had not been the problem, only where and when. Now, all was in readiness. The low, barely discernable hum of the amplifier told us that it was warmed up and ready for action, and we both knew that the rest of the components were, too."

Cover Page Footnote

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He tenderly lifted the album from the stack and then we both freed *Miles Davis . . . 'Round About Midnight*, CL 949 from its unwanted jacket and sleeve. We didn't even read the liner notes, for we already knew all the lines. We carefully prepared for this long-awaited performance, and the conditions were perfect as we slipped our record onto the turntable. Then, deftly positioning the tone arm, he caressed it into the first cut on Side 2. It was our favorite, *Bye, Bye, Blackbird*. It had always seemed sad before, but now I was not afraid of its ever leaving.

The song began in a somewhat clumsy, jumbled, and almost squeaky manner, but soon Miles smoothly rose to the fore and set the pattern for the rest to follow. And his magnificent horn, though now softly muted, was as powerful as I have ever heard. It was subtly bidding its time. Miles was tender and guiding in that opening passage, and I followed him as closely as I could, eager to find out where his next note, his next phrase would lead me.

When John Coltrane's golden tenor finally took the lead and sped onward, the beat became hard and driving. I could feel every breath of his horn as if it were a part of me. He egged me on further, leading me I know not where, but I knew he was saving himself still, now only barely started.

Then the rhythm section, consisting of Red Garland's piano, the Paul Chambers' bass, and the pounding drums of Philly Joe Jones were playing alone, but still they kept at the exact point where the horns had left off and remained there for what seemed an eternity. Then, almost without warning, the individual pulsing of drums and bass was felt apart from the smoothly gliding piano. At this signal, the horns quietly returned. Then the whole group throbbed and drove on as one. And suddenly I knew that each musician was playing his instrument with every ounce of feeling in his body. At that instant I could feel the wild fury of the Quintet as I never believed possible.

Then the song was over. The blackbird had flown but now would return and return.

M. G. CULROSS