

Tommy Flanagan

"...premier living exponent of bebop piano..."

- Zan Stewart, LA Times

"The standard by which piano trios are measured..."

- Gary Giddins, Village Voice

"So consistently fine, reviewing him almost seems unnecessary"

- Chip Deffaa, NY Post

"Tommy Flanagan is more than just a pianist. He is so consistently excellent that he is approaching the status of a national treasure."

- Bob Porter, WBGO Newark

"Tommy Flanagan is a genius" - Ella Fitzgerald

"... Flanagan is the finest lyric pianist around..."

- David Grogan - People Magazine

"...arguably the greatest bebop pianist living..."

- Stanley Crouch, Village Voice

Rarely has such unanimously unstinting praise been bestowed on a less self-congratulatory recipient. As genial and matter-of-fact off the stand as he is fiercely individual at the keys, Tommy Flanagan handles his world class ranking with an equanimity, a modesty, an easy friendliness not always associated with the psychic burden of being Number One. Perhaps because almost instant early recognition by his peers and the universal affection in which he has been held by them over the years has made for a warm and artistically rewarding roost in the jazz jungle for Tommy Flanagan. Or perhaps it is owing to his wholesome origins, as one of six children of an upwardly striving, musically enthusiastic family in Detroit.

Whatever, Flanagan made his professional debut in 1945 at age 15, joining forces with fellow Motor City budding heavyweights Milt Jackson, Thad Jones, Elvin Jones and Kenny Burrell, playing clubs like the Bluebird, Detroit's renowned jazz room. Flanagan hit New York in 1956, his first gig being a sub job at Birdland for Bud Powell, whom he recalls as a major influence on his own early development, along with Art Tatum and Nat Cole. Flanagan's own gifts were so readily apparent, in short order he was tapped for recording dates with such jazz icons as Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane, Charles Mingus and Miles Davis.

In 1957 Flanagan made his first trio album, "Tommy Flanagan Overseas," with Elvin Jones and Wilbur Little, which has been reissued many times and is now a collectors' item. He made more than 100 recordings from 1956 through 1968, many of which have become essential to any serious jazz record library.

From 1968 to 1978, Flanagan toured extensively with Ella Fitzgerald. During that time his recently reissued trio album, "Montreux 77," was recorded. It was with Ella Fitzgerald that he earned his stripes as a jazz's supreme accompanist, a designation widely acknowledged throughout the industry.

In 1978, in a momentous departure, Flanagan formed his own trio and has since performed almost exclusively in that format. His recording career has since flowered with 15 universally admired albums as a soloist or leading his trio. Over the years the Tommy Flanagan Trio has boasted such significant drummers as Elvin Jones, Al Foster and Art Taylor. He has also employed such gifted younger drummers as Kenny Washington and more recently Lewis Nash. Since launching his trio, the bassist Flanagan has used most notably has been George Mraz, the Czech virtuoso. Mraz's ability to follow Flanagan's abundantly creative, ever surprising trail is impressive.

Flanagan has had four Grammy nominations, two for Best Jazz Performance (Group) and two for Best Jazz Performance (Soloist).

He was voted Top Jazz Pianist in DownBeat's most recent Readers' Poll as well as winning Jazz Times' both Critics' and Readers' Poll.

Tommy Flanagan's lyrical style, at once tough, tender, and bouncing with jaunty humor, expresses a beautifully polished and melodic side of bebop. It has steadily grown in distinction and maturity, and through it all, it swings