

JAZZ LINES PUBLICATIONS

*Presents*

**YARDBIRD SUITE**

AS RECORDED BY CLAUDE THORNHILL

ARRANGED BY GIL EVANS

EDITED BY JEFFREY SULTANOF

**FULL SCORE**

FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT

JLP-8124

MUSIC BY CHARLIE PARKER

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A NOT-FOR-PROFIT JAZZ RESEARCH ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO PRESERVING AND PROMOTING AMERICA'S MUSICAL HERITAGE.



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# YARDBIRD SUITE (1947)

## **Background:**

Gil Evans had it made. He was able to write exactly what he wanted for one of the most interesting big bands of the 1940s, led by a talented, erratic pianist/arranger named Claude Thornhill. By 1947, according to Evans biographer Stephanie Stein Crease, Evans was running the band, and Thornhill just showed up to the jobs. Evans was even responsible for recruiting other arrangers, and John Carisi, George Russell and a young composer whom Evans considered a major talent named Gerry Mulligan added material to the band's book.

In addition to dreamy ballad settings of pop songs old and new, and medleys of songs for dancing, Evans wanted to give some modern jazz themes the Thornhill approach. Anthology, Donna Lee and Yardbird Suite became three unusual, striking treatments of bebop, especially since these settings were written for musicians who, by and large, had no background in playing the new music. He rehearsed these arrangements carefully and got the results he wanted. The first two titles cited were recorded commercially for Columbia Records and for radio-only transcriptions, the last title only once. Thornhill disliked them and didn't want to play them on live gigs. They were usually heard during the last set of the evening, when the leader left the stand and the musicians chose the music they wanted to play.

By late 1947, Thornhill told Evans that he wanted to refocus the band's direction back to his original vision - the band as backdrop to the leader's piano solos. Evans and Thornhill, colleagues and friends for almost ten years, parted amicably in early 1948. With the input of younger composers such as Gerry Mulligan, Johnny Mandel, George Russell, John Carisi and John Lewis, Evans then concentrated on putting together a small band that imitated the Thornhill sound. The result would come to be known as the Birth of the Cool band, but that's another story.

## **The Music:**

*Yardbird Suite* was recorded for Columbia Records on December 17th, 1947. The score also has the subtitle *What Price Love*, the lyricised version of the tune, which Parker wrote himself. The score is undated.

The arrangement was cut for the recording. A listing of these cuts is shown below:

- a) Bars 1-10
- b) Bars 19-29
- c) The musical figures in bars 99 through the last sixteenth of 101.

In addition, the alto saxophone solo from bars 70-100 was split between also sax (Lee Konitz on the original recording) and trumpet from bar 85 (Louis Mucci).

The instrumentation is 3 trumpets, 2 trombones, 2 French horns, 2 trombones, tuba, guitar, piano, bass and drums.

Alternate parts are available to replace instruments not commonly found in many student jazz ensembles. These are outlined below:

- Trumpet 4 substitutes for French horn 1
- Trombone 3 substitutes for French horn 2
- Trombone 4 (bass) substitutes for Tuba

I strongly urge the conductor not to double these parts. If you have two French horns, please do not use trumpet 4 and trombone 3; similarly, if you have a tuba, do not use trombone 4. Evans' voicings and balances are very specific and using all of the parts will alter the sound significantly, making proper balance impossible.

### **Notes to the Conductor:**

Despite the importance of Gil Evans to the Thornhill ensemble sound, it was the leader who designed the vibrato-less, warm ensemble sound founded on clarinets and French horns before the band was formed in 1940. Gil Evans built on this concept and developed it further, but all of the Thornhill arrangers were expected to use this sound as a base. In fact, the saxophone sound of *Yardbird Suite*, while indicative of the sounds during the big band era, is actually quite unusual for this band. Evans was generally not fond of a saxophone section; the scores Evans wrote for Miles Davis in the late fifties have only one saxophone chair (alto) and the remaining three reed players in the section double on various types of flutes and clarinets.

Because the sound of the Thornhill ensemble is predicated on balancing every part into a large mass vs. balancing different instrumental sections, the conductor might do well to warm the ensemble up by having the musicians play one chord so that 1) he/she can listen to and adjust the balance, and 2) the musicians can hear and adapt to this sound. Some possibilities are the half-note chords in bars 52, 62 and 140. This is an excellent way to have the musicians experience and get used to the sound.

An interesting issue worth commenting on is Evans' use of dotted eighths-sixteenths for swing rhythms on the original manuscript. Even though Evans could notate music the way an improviser would play it, sometimes his notation was confusing and cumbersome. Evans would re-write musical figures to make them simpler; there are many such examples in the scores he wrote for the Miles Davis albums. It was the decision of the publisher to change the dotted eighth-sixteenth figures to eighths, a decision with which I agree.

It is important to note that Evans was a linear writer vs. a chordal writer. In other words, his voice leading dictated the chord names he used, not vice versa. Some of his chordal structures may be written in more than one way, but it is important to look carefully at what he wrote to determine what the real harmonies are. A very good example may be found in bar 148, which could be thought of as a  $G7\#9$ . But this is deceptive. Evans clearly wants a  $Bb$  in the bass and a  $B$  natural an octave higher. Looking at the chord, he is clearly outlining an altered triad based on  $Eb$ ; this is confirmed by the bass line and the chords that follow. There are many such instances in Evans' writing where analysis of the voice leading leads the musician to what Evans wanted. Other examples of such deceptive harmony occur in bars 7-8 in *Sorta-Kinda*, another Thornhill score, and in *Jambangle* for the album *Gil Evans and Ten*.

Some of the musical figures will be far easier to play if the music is played a bit slower than on the original recording. The metronome marking reflects this.

**Jeffrey Sultanof**

- October 2009



# YARDBIRD SUITE

## SCORE

RECORDED BY CLAUDE THORNHILL

MUSIC BY CHARLIE PARKER

ARRANGED BY GIL EVANS

EDITED BY JEFFREY SULTANOF

BRIGHT SWING ♩ = 132

①

The score is for a jazz ensemble. It includes parts for Alto Sax 1 & 2, Tenor Sax 1 & 2, Baritone Sax, Trumpet 1-4 (with an alternate part for the 4th), Horn in F 1 & 2, Trombone 1-4 (with alternate parts for the 3rd and 4th), and Tuba. The guitar part is optional and shows chords: Gm7, C7(9)/G, D7/G, D7(9)/G, and Gm7(9). The piano part features a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets. The drum set part is marked with a (4) above it. The score is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#).

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A. Sax. 1  
A. Sax. 2  
T. Sax. 1  
T. Sax. 2  
B. Sax.  
Trpt. 1  
Trpt. 2  
Trpt. 3  
Trpt. 4 (Alt.)  
Hrn. 1  
Hrn. 2  
Tbn. 1  
Tbn. 2  
Tbn. 3 (Alt.)  
Tbn. 4 (Alt.)  
Tuba  
Gtr.  
PNO  
BASS  
D. S.

Chord symbols: D7/G, Fm7/G, D<sup>b</sup>/G, C7(13)

6 7 8 9 10