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PLAY-A-LONG CD INFORMATION

STEREO SEPARATION: LEFT CHANNEL=Bass & Drums; RIGHT CHANNEL=Piano & Drums TUNING NOTES: Concert Bb & A (A=440)

PERSONNEL ON PLAY-A-LONG RECORDING

STEVE ALLEE - Piano; RUFUS REID - Bass; JONATHAN HIGGINS - Drums

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EDDIE HARRIS BIOGRAPHY

Eddie Harris was born October 20, 1934 in Chicago, Illinois. He began his career as a singer in various Baptist churches throughout Chicago. Around the age of three, Eddie's cousin, Bernice Benson, who played piano at Eddie's mother's church, began teaching him how to play the piano where he learned how to play by ear and eventually learned to read music.

Eddie Harris' educational background began at the John Farren and Burke Elementary schools. He later attended DuSable and Hyde Park High Schools in Chicago.

Eddie Harris first started playing the vibraphone while attending DuSable High School under the guidance of a well-known and influential Black leader, Captain Walter Dyette. Capt. Dyette was responsible for the development of several Jazz musicians who came out of Chicago during the 1940's, 1950's and the early 1960's. Capt. Walter Dyette passed away in the mid 1970's.

Eddie Harris always wanted to play the saxophone simply because he admired the way it looked. But in order to play saxophone for Capt. Dyette one had to play the clarinet first, so Eddie's first wind instrument was the clarinet. Eddie took private clarinet and saxophone lessons for many years and then began his saxophone career playing with all types of bands.

After graduation from high school, Eddie Harris continued his musical studies at Illinois University and Roosevelt University. Eventually, he was drafted into the Army, at which time he was placed in the area of electronics. He later went airborne and soon became disgusted with seeing many of the soldiers being injured. He auditioned for the Army band. By this time, Eddie could play the piano, saxophone, vibraphone, clarinet, trumpet, trombone, and the bassoon. He took the Army's music exam and out of a possible score of 100 where he was tested on reading music, ear training, written phrases and command of the instrument, Eddie received a score of 98. His score was so high that it was recommended that he play in the Seventh Army Symphony Orchestra in Germany. The symphony was unable to take on any additional band members at that time, so Eddie was placed in the Army band in Fulda, Germany for eight months. Subsequently, Eddie became a member of the Seventh Army Symphony Orchestra and he became part of the Jazz band that was formed from the orchestra and was able to tour France and Germany. As a result, Eddie became internationally known. He also took classical saxophone lessons at the Paris Conservatory of Music. Upon his return to the United States after leaving the armed services, Eddie began living and playing in New York City. He worked consistently with Pit Bands, Jazz Bands and combos as well as playing piano.

Due to an illness in his family, Eddie returned to Chicago, Illinois and eventually met and married Sara Elizabeth and they had two daughters - Lolita and Yvonne. Eddie has always been known for his experiments with the tenor saxophone. For example, he used to play the tenor saxophone with a trombone mouthpiece and called it the Saxobone. In later years, he began using a clarinet, double barrel joint in between the neck and the instrument. The tenor sax was made to sound like a bass clarinet.

He then began playing saxophone with a bassoon boccel instead of the tenor sax neck. He recorded with these sounds on his album entitled, "A Study in Jazz" on Vee Jay Records. The main purpose with the boccel substitution was to make the tenor sax sound like a bassoon. He could make all these sounds with only a few spare parts along with the tenor saxophone.

Another one of Eddie's creations and most popular was the reed mouthpiece. He holds the U.S. patent for the reed mouthpiece for the trumpet, coronet, trombone and flugelhorn. Eddie Harris was the first musician to create the Electro Voice and Selmer Saxophone creation for all saxophones and the attachment was called, "The Varitone" which was designed in order to play along with the sound of the saxophone a sub octave plus a filter that could change the timbre of the tone. Eddie later signed onto the Chicago Musical Instrument Company, also known as Noreland. He introduced their new unit called the "W2," a filtering unit for the saxophone and the clarinet that emulated the organ stops. He then went with a company called Innovex, a division of Hammond Organ that created a unit called the "Condour". This unit was similar to the "W2" but had more tabs and a modern circuitry. Eddie began advertising for a company called Frapp which had one of the most sophisticated audio pickups for wind instruments. Eddie developed "The Eddie Harris Attachment", a wind synthesizer housing four oscillators that enable any sax player to play in five (5) part harmony as in a reed section of a big band. Eddie played on a Selmar sax, a Mark VI with a Selmar mouthpiece called a C start with a Selmar reed size number three (# 3).

Eddie encompasses the use of his genius ability of the reed trumpet, tenor sax and the "Eddie Harris Attachment" on the CD entitled, "Eddie Harris Quartet Steps Up" on the track "Freedom Jazz Dance."

Eddie Harris was a man immersed in music as a composer, bandleader, performer, writer, innovator, inventor, and social critic.

It was during the 1960's that Vee Jay Records asked Eddie to record for their label, but they wanted Eddie to play piano. After some discussion, it was agreed that Eddie would record half the album playing piano and the other half playing saxophone.

Eddie made his first major recording under his own name with Vee Jay Records in 1961. One of the tunes made on his first album was entitled, "Exodus to Jazz." This composition was entitled, "Exodus" from the motion picture of the same title. The song was first released on a 45 rpm and sold well over a million copies which placed him at Gold Status. After two years, Eddie left Vee Jay Records and began recording for Columbia Records and then Atlantic Records. He recorded on Atlantic Records for over a decade.

Eddie recorded "Listen Here" (a hit which coined Eddie, "The Electrifying Eddie Harris") and composed the jazz tune, "Freedom Jazz Dance" which became a standard modern work recorded by Miles Davis and 53 other artists. He is noted for a very successful partnership with pianist Les McCann in the late 60's; a union which produced the Atlantic LP Swiss Movement - another million seller in 1969. In 1970, this record awarded Eddie and Les a Grammy nomination at the 13th Annual GRAMMY Awards for the category of Best Jazz Performance/Small Group or Soloist with Small Group. Eddie performed throughout the world at several domestic and international venues, concert halls, NBA games, and festivals. Some of his most notable festival performances are: "The Montreaux Jazz Festival" in Switzerland, "Soul to Soul" in West Africa, "The North Sea Jazz Festival" in the Netherlands and "The Playboy" and "Monterey Festival" in California.

Although Eddie played and experimented with several instruments, his primary and by far most proficient instrument was the tenor saxophone.

Eddie Harris, the saxophonist, is the exploration in self-study. He describes his sound as a soft sound. Some call it the Stan Getz School, but it's really the Lester Young School. Eddie plays this type of sound so he can skip over the horn faster, in which he sacrifices volume for speed. According to Eddie, "cats can play loud like Gene Ammons and Sonny Rollins but don't play as fast as Sonny Stitt. When anyone else plays fast, they get softer because they can't maintain volume going that fast."

In later years, Eddie began singing due to the restrictions he faced playing the saxophone on funk tunes. "I would play more saxophone, but I realized the fact that if I played more saxophone I'd have to play a lot more "Listen Here", and that was limiting my saxophone playing, so I figured that a way that I didn't have to play so much funk on the saxophone was to start singing." Vocal recordings for Eddie represented pragmatism rather than fashion and provided both latitude and fulfillment for him as a jazz instrumentalist.

As a composer and performer, Eddie is not limited to any of the musical vehicles within his grasp. He is most closely identified by the public and music critics in the funk-fusion genre – identification not without benefits. One such benefit has been access to the mass audience. A second product of the funk label, not necessarily a benefit, has been the problem of stereotyping and categorization. His reputation as a funk player has narrowed the public and music industry's view of him. As a result, in the mid-1970s, Eddie worked consistently, but he did not have access to many of the prestigious and profitable musical outlets (concerts, tours, etc.) This situation did not embitter Eddie, but has made him an astute businessman and musician and in turn, allowed him to concentrate more on his music.

Part of understanding Eddie Harris, THE MUSICIAN, is understanding, Eddie Harris, THE MAN. One characteristic of Eddie the man is his dislike for cliques and fads. "I'm not hung up with fads, for the simple reason that they stunt my growth."

This love for individuality is apparent in Eddie Harris' music and in whom he cites as influences. "I call it inspiration," and "I like to hear anybody that is individualistic especially if they are individualistic minded. You can hear it come out in their playing ... Monk, Miles, Mingus, Duke, Sun Ra, Tristano, Kool and The Gang, Sly, Bartok, Scheonberg ... anything that people do that is unique and different."

Eddie Harris is much more than the funk player and humorist that he is often presented as. His musical and intellectual interests and capabilities are broad and he seems guided by one consistent force which is HONESTY. After talking with him briefly or listening to one of his live performances, his sincerity and honesty are easy to detect.

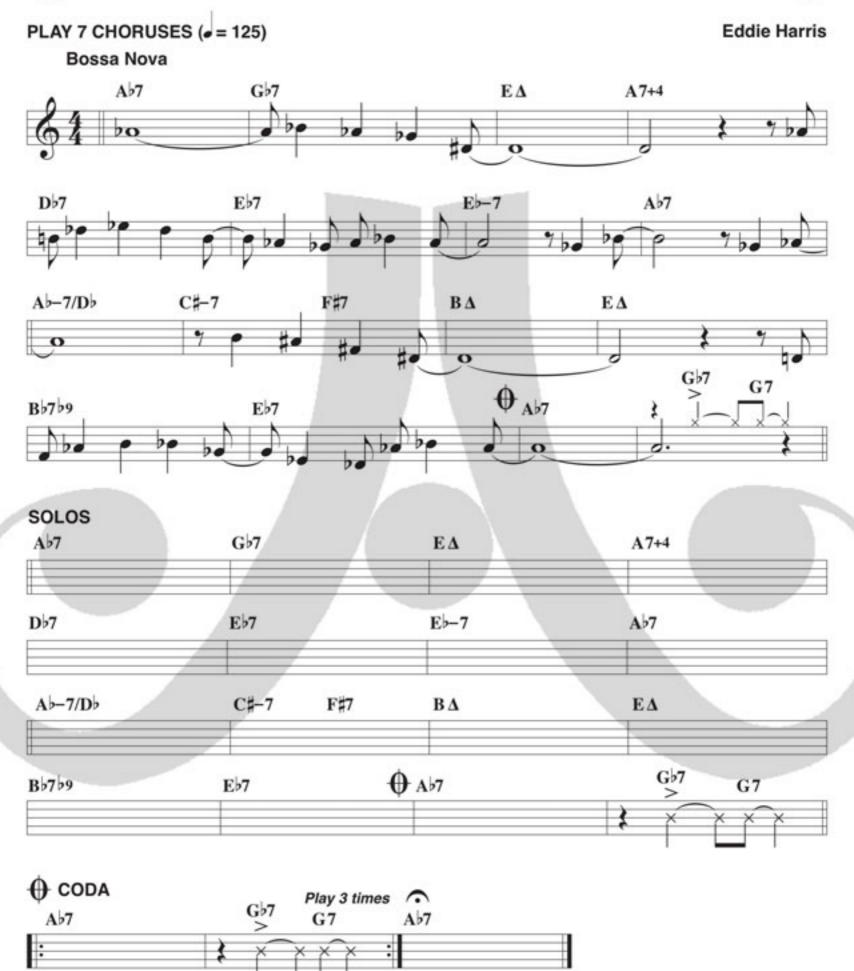
In the course of recording more than 70 albums and CD's, and the author of seven (7) music books, Eddie has displayed himself as a jazz artist who has played blues, rock, jazz fusion, straight-ahead, soul and funk grooves. Eddie's pioneering work in musical electronics and the effective conjunction of different elements of blues, rhythm and blues, jazz and funk has had widespread influence of what is generally considered today's music. Eddie's music has been sampled by over 30 artists including: Macy Gray, Jamiroquai, DJ Jazz Jeff (and The Fresh Prince (Will Smith)), and Heavy D.

Eddie was by far and foremost a great musician and a great human being. He was a master of his talents and a wonderful family man. His demise in November 1996 was a tragedy to his family and fans. His contributions to the music world will always be appreciated, recognized, and remembered. Eddie is survived by his wife Sara and their two daughters.



1. Boogie Woogie Bossa Nova







6. Listen Here



Eddie Harris

