

Hello, Mr. Lightsey

By Chris Jorgensen
Staff Writer

"Goodbye Mr. Evans"
Kirk Lightsey Trio
Evidence ★★★★★

Jazz history has its share of tragically overlooked players and high on that list is Detroit-born pianist Kirk Lightsey.

During the '60s and '70s, Lightsey rose quickly, backing stalwarts like Sonny Stitt, Chet Baker and Dexter Gordon. As a leader, however, he has laid low; he lives in France, tours minimally and records his many gems for tiny independent labels like Sunnyside and Lime Tree.

For this tribute to Bill Evans, Lightsey returns to a trio format with drummer Famoudou Don Moye and bassist Tibor Elekes. The trio format is the perfect structure for Lightsey's sparkling playing style.

As usual, Lightsey tests his skills on classics from giants like Brubeck, Coltrane, Monk and even Chopin. And as he has so many times, he covers his hero Wayne Shorter, whose blaring sax tunes must be nightmarish to arrange for piano.

It's on the Chopin piece that Lightsey's improvisational powers are most impressive. He rarely marches down the middle of a melody, instead dancing around the edges in a lyrical and deliberate way. The exception is when he covers Monk's difficult "Four In One." While he remains faithful to Monk's driving boppishness, he makes it swing with bluesy improvisations.

KIRK LIGHTSEY TRIO Goodbye Mr. Evans



Detroit-born pianist Kirk Lightsey racks up another winner with his new CD.

used a horn section before anyone else and teamed with weird poet Shel Silverstein on hits like the humorous "Marie Laveau" and the unabashedly sentimental "Daddy, What If."

Bare's duets with Skeeter Davis are here, along with some nearly forgotten gems like "Detroit City," "The Winner," and "Margie's At The Lincoln Park Inn."

There isn't much new to say about Patsy Cline except that she's been repackaged to death. To RCA's credit, some of her more obscure songs, like "Love Me Honey Do" and "Hungry For Love" have been included, along with standards like "Walkin' After Midnight."

Each of the reasonably priced

disks comes nicely packaged with rare photos and illuminating new biographical liner notes.

Ratings Guide: ★★★★★, excellent; ★★★, good; ★★, fair; ★, below average; no stars, use as a drink coaster. Special ★★★★★ rating reserved for classics.

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SOUNDBITES: To hear a sample of Kirk Lightsey, select 3810. To hear a sample of Guy Clark, select 3811. To hear Gary Stewart, select 3812.

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Weekly charts for the nation's best-selling recorded music as they appear in Billboard magazine. (Platinum signifies more than 1 million)