

# TIME OUT

## THE DAVE BRUBECK QUARTET



*Time Out* was an unusual album from the start, as it featured unusual time signatures on all of its tracks. While most tunes in occidental popular music are in 4/4, alternating with the 3/4 waltz form here and there, *Time Out* was devoted to rhythms that had never been

previously heard in jazz. It took Dave Brubeck, Paul Desmond, and all of the members of the group by surprise when such an experimental LP became an absolute hit. Most of the songs were composed by Brubeck himself. However, "Take Five" was a Paul Desmond composition and it would become the quartet's most celebrated tune.

### THE ORIGINAL LINER NOTES:

#### **TIME OUT** (Columbia CS 8192)

Should some cool-minded Martian come to earth and check on the state of our music, he might play through 10,000 jazz records before he found one that wasn't in common 4/4 time. Considering the emancipation of jazz in other ways, this is a sobering thought... and an astonishing one. The New Orleans pioneers soon broke free of the tyranny imposed by the easy brass key of B-flat. Men like Coleman Hawkins brought a new chromaticism to jazz. Bird, Diz and Monk broadened its harmonic horizon. Duke Ellington gave it structure, and a wide palette of colors. Yet rhythmically, jazz has not progressed. Born within earshot of the street parade, and with the stirring songs of the Civil War still echoing through the South, jazz music was bounded by the left-right, left-right of marching feet.

Dave Brubeck, pioneer already in so many other fields, is really the first to explore the uncharted seas of compound time. True, some musicians before him experimented with jazz in waltz time, notably Benny Carter and Max Roach. But Dave has gone further, finding still more exotic time signatures, and even laying one rhythm in counterpoint over another.

The outcome of his experiments is this album. Basically it shows the blending of three cultures: the formalism of classical Western music, the freedom of jazz improvisation, and the often complex pulse of African folk music. Brubeck even uses, in the first number, a Turkish folk rhythm.

"Blue Rondo à la Turk" plunges straight into the most jazz-remote time-signature, 9/8, grouped not in the usual form (3-3-3) but 2-2-2-3. When the gusty opening section gives way to a more familiar jazz beat, the three eighth-notes have become equivalent to one quarter-note, and an alternating 9/8 – 4/4 time leads into a fine solo by Paul Desmond.

Dave follows, with a characteristically neat transition into the heavy block chords which are a familiar facet of his style, and before long "Rondo À La Turk" is a stamping, shouting blues. Later the tension is dropped deliberately for Paul's re-entry, and for the alternate double-bars of 9- and 4- time which herald the returning theme. The whole piece is in classical rondo form.

"Strange Meadow Lark" opens with Brubeck playing rubato, though there are overtones of 3s and 4s, and fine phrase length is an unusual 10 bars. Dave's performance throughout is simple and expressive, with fine support from Eugene Wright and Joe Morello. "Meadow Lark" closes with a contribution from the wistful, dream-like saxophone of Paul Desmond.

"Take Five" is a Desmond composition in 5/4, one of the most defiant time-signatures in all music, for the performer and listener alike. Conscious of how easily a fine listener can lose his way in a quintuple rhythm, Dave plays a constant vamp figure throughout, maintaining it even under Joe Morello's drum solo. It is interesting to notice how Morello gradually releases himself from the rigidity of the 5/4 pulse, creating intricate and often counter-patterns over the piano figure. And contrary to any normal expectation –perhaps even the composer's! – "Take Five" really swings.

At first hearing, "Three to Get Ready" promises to be a simple, Haydn-esque waltz theme in C major. But before long it begins to vacillate between 3- and 4- time, and fine pattern becomes clear: two bars of 3, followed by two bars of 4. It is a metrical theme which suits Dave Brubeck down to the ground; his solo here is one of the album's highspots. "Kathy's Waltz" (dedicated to Dave's little daughter) starts in 4, only later breaking into quick waltz time. As in the now famous "Someday My Prince Will Come," Dave starts in triple time, then urges his piano into a rocking slow 4. Theoretically it is as if Morello's three beats had ceased to be the basic pulse, and had become triplets in a slow 4-beat blues –though with Wright's 1 in-a-bar bass as the constant link between piano and drums. The listener who keeps abreast of the cross-rhythms here can congratulate himself on sharing with the Brubeck Quartet an enlightened rhythmic sense. Even feet are useless in following a time experiment of such complexity.

"Everybody's Jumpin'" opens without any precise feeling of key, but with a vague impression of 6/4 time, and a strong beat. Joe Morello's brief drum solo shows again what a superb colorist he is on the canvas of percussion tone.

With "Pick Up Sticks" the earlier hint of 6/4 becomes positive. As so often in Brubeck's time experiments, it is the bass part which supplies the anchor for the listener. This time Eugene Wright plays a regular pattern of six notes: a passacaglia on which is built the whole structure of this closing number.

The highspot of "Pick Up Sticks" comes near the close, in a session of commanding piano. This is Brubeck in the grand manner, as exciting as eight brass, but with that feeling of urgent discovery which can never be captured by the arranger's pen. In short: *Time Out* is a first experiment with time, which may well come to be regarded as more than an arrow pointing to the future. Something great has been attempted... and achieved.

The very first arrow has found its mark.

Steve Race



### Side A

- 1 **BLUE RONDO À LA TURK** 6:46
- 2 **STRANGE MEADOW LARK** 7:24
- 3 **TAKE FIVE** 5:27

### Side B

- 1 **THREE TO GET READY** 5:26
- 2 **KATHY'S WALTZ** 4:51
- 3 **EVERYBODY'S JUMPIN'** 4:25
- 4 **PICK UP STICKS** 4:17
- 5 **AUDREY** 3:36\*

**PAUL DESMOND**, alto sax  
**DAVE BRUBECK**, piano  
**EUGENE WRIGHT**, bass  
**JOE MORELLO**, drums

Recorded in New York, June 25 (B1-B3),  
 July 1 (A2-A3) & August 18 (A1, B4), 1959.

\*Bonus track: Same personnel except Bob Bates (b) & Joe Dodge (d) replace Wright and Morello. New York, October 12, 1954.

★★★★★ **AllMusic**

"Dave Brubeck's defining master-piece, *Time Out* is one of the most rhythmically innovative albums in jazz history, the first to consciously explore time signatures outside of the standard 4/4 beat or 3/4 waltz time. This belongs in even the most rudimentary jazz collection." (Steve Huey)



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