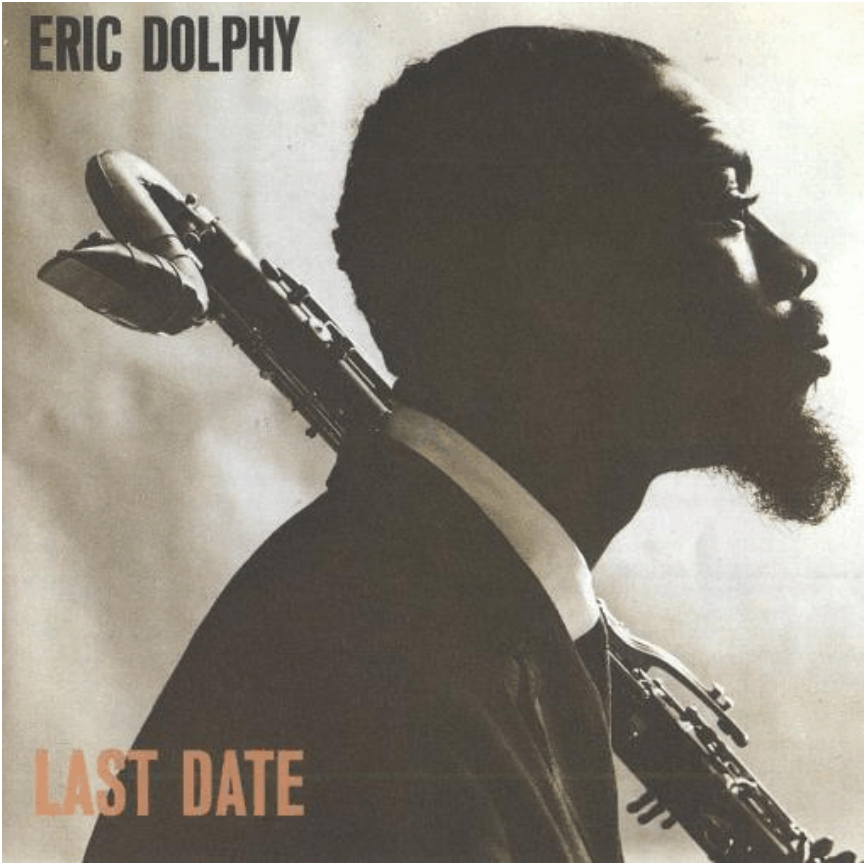

ERIC DOLPHY
LAST DATE

The man's music had scorching power and there was often an exultant quality in his explosive solos - like, “Look how far I can GO on this horn!” The man himself was extraordinarily gentle. Not soft, but considerate, and remarkably free of malice. Eric Dolphy died in Berlin, Germany, on June 29, 1964. He was only thirtysix. The void he left was a considerable one in jazz. To those who knew him, the loss was personally acute because one gets to experience exceedingly few Eric Dolphys in a lifetime.

Charles Mingus, with whom Eric worked for a number of years, is not known for euphemisms. He speaks his mind about the live and the dead, the daily drag and the cosmic woe. So it comes with particular force when Mingus says: “Usually, when a man dies, you remember - or you say you remember - only the good things about him. With Eric, that's all you could remember. I don't remember any drags he did to anybody. The man was absolutely without a need to hurt.”

Mingus went on to talk of Eric's music: “He had such a big sound, as big as Charlie Parker's, I mean, he didn't need a microphone. In that way, he was like the jazz musicians of the old school. Inside that sound was a great capacity to talk in his music about the most basic feelings. We used to do that, you know. We used to actually talk in our playing. He knew that level of the language which very few musicians get down to.

“Another thing about Eric,” Mingus continued, “is that he was a complete musician. He could make it in a classical group. And, of course, he was entirely his own man when he soloed. Eric wasn't like a lot of the kids who call themselves 'new'. He had mastered jazz. And he had mastered all the instruments he played. In fact, he knew more than was supposed to be possible to do on them.

“He practiced,” Mingus recalled, “incessantly. One of the last times I saw him was at a party in Europe. When I got there, the room was full of people talking and drinking. In a corner, listening to a Charlie Parker record, there was Eric practicing along with the record. He had music on his mind all the time. I don't know a time when he wasn't either playing or thinking about playing.”

“A woman once told me,” Mingus said, “about the effect of just looking at Eric from the audience. lt was something about his eyes. The intelligence, the sense that he was absorbing *everything* around him. You know, there was a luminous quality about Eric, like he had distilled everything he was into the act of listening to and playing music. And another thing was that although he had his economic troubles and problems of not getting wide enough acceptance, he was always encouraging other people. I went through a time at a club we were playing in for a long while when I stopped taking solos. I was dragged because people weren't listening. He kept after me to

solo again. 'Man,' he'd say, You've got to play. There are *some* people out there listening. Somebody cares.' No, I don't remember anything bad about this cat."

Another caracteristic of Eric was his ceaseless wonder at the continual surprises in finding oneself through music. "There's so much to learn," Eric told me a few years ago, "and so much to try to get out. I keep hearing something else beyond what I've done. There's always been something else to strive for. The more I grow in my music, the more possibilities of new things I hear. It's like never stop finding sound I hadn't thought existed."

Eric's last chance an recordings to keep finding sounds he hadn't thought existed was this session on June 2, 1964, in Hilversum, Holland. The rhythm section consisted of Misja Mengelberg, piano; Jacques Schols, bass; and Han Bennink, drums. An index of the pleasure Eric felt at working with this *rhythm* section was that he invited them to join him for an engagement at the Club Montmartre in Copenhagen. The letter containing the final details of the gig came to Han Bennink two days after Eric's death.

From the opening, lunging entrance to Thelonious Monk's *Epistrophy* an bass clarinet, Eric was irrepressibly engaged in search. The way Eric played the challenging bass clarinet, which he explored more *fully* than anyone else had in jazz before, was well described in *Down Beat* by musician-critic Don Heckman: "In Dolphy's hands, the bass clarinet was never an awkward

instrument; it possessed, instead, a serpentine aliveness that literally coiled with vitality." Because of difficulties endemic to the way the instrument is structured, few musicians can range easily throughout its whole spectrum; but Eric had achieved total control and, as Heckman has observed, "he was ranging not only throughout its complete breadth but in and out of harmonic overtone extensions as well."

*The Madrig Speaks, The Panther Walks* is another Dolphy original. Here Eric plays alto, and that was the instrument an which he first became widely known. I remember hearing him for the first time with Chico Hamilton in 1958. I'd heard that Chico's new group was much more emotionally driving than his previous chamber-like units, but I was not prepared for the lean young man who played alto with such searing intensity and in a style that was unmistakably and fiercely his own. By the time of this recording, Eric had continued to build on that style so that he was able to experiment more and widely an those speech-like sounds and figures he so liked. And yet, as you can hear in this track, underneath the successful experimentation was a basic concern with lyricism - with an unabashed, unfeigned intimacy and emotional expression.



In Misja Mengelberg's *Hypochristmutreefuzz,* Eric returns to the bass clarinet. Mengelberg himself is impressive in the percussive incisiveness and harmonic astuteness with which he both solos and accompanies. Eric customarily travels the whole circuit of jazz history in his solos in the sense that an inseparable part of his avant-garde adventures is the kind of "speaking" on a horn that marked the work of the very first jazzman throughout the South and Southwest. I think, for example, that George Lewis or Jim Robinson would have little difficulty in understanding the fundamental thrust of Eric's music, even if they couldn't follow the exact logistics of his improvisations. *South Street Exit* was one of Eric's own pieces. Just as he kept going deeper and deeper into the expressive possibilities of his Instruments, so Eric kept growing as a composer. In this quicksilver-like tune, he switches to flute, an Instrument on which he was - for me - the most resourceful and personal of all the musicians who have been trying to transmute the elusive sound of that Instrument into jazz. On the flute, as on all the other horns he played, Eric listened for ways in which to play speech-like sounds and rhythms. And on the flute particularly, his remark about birds has special relevance. "Why shouldn't I imitate birds?" Eric once told Leonard Feather. "I can remember when the birds used to whistle along with me, back home in California and I'd drop whatever I was doing and play along with them. Sure it's deliberate; I've always liked birds and I like to sound like them." But, of course, it was

more than imitation. lt was the incorporation into his music of yet another of the sounds around him that intrigued him. And the sound of the birds became annealed to all those other sonic elements in the air - if one is able to hear them all. To Eric, no sound was alien to jazz.

*You Don't Know What Love Is* is one of the most mesmeric flute performances by Eric on record. Here his basic lyricism is clearly revealed and sustained. And with it are those turns of imagination that enabled Eric to add a further dimension to so familiar a song. Note too the subtleties of shading, the persistently fresh choice of notes and the resilient rhythmic line which is so sure in its underlying pulsation that it allows the best to breathe.

The final *Miss Ann,* a Dolphy composition, is a brightly affectionate portrait, sketched with the alto. Hearing it, I was reminded of Mingus' point about the fullness of Eric's sound. One of the most exciting kicks in jazz listening was the sudden emergence of that Dolphy sound from an ensemble. lt was not only its soaring strength that pulled you into the music, but there was also the enormous vitality powering the sound. And, of course, the swiftly moving arabesques of ideas. In 1963, Eric Salzman, then a reviewer of classical music for the *New York Herold Tribune,* caught that particular impact of Eric Dolphy rising to solo. Salzman was reviewing a concert by Orchestra U.S.A. at Hunter College, and he wrote of this young man “who produces... incredible cries from the bottom to the tip-top of a whole range of wood-

wind instruments... Mr. Dolphy can no doubt produce his fantastic sound... on anything you can blow a noise out of; he could, I'm sure, play with the same extreme expressive intensity on a pop bottle. He is, at any rate, a unique genius; you'll never know if he'll make it, but when he does - wow!"
Now, all that is left of this unique musician is in memory and, fortunately, on record. This album ends with Eric's voice (sounding, incidentally, very much like LeRoi Jones'): "When you hear music, after it's over, it's gone in the air. You can never capture it again." For Eric, this was especially true. He never wanted to play anything exactly as he played it before, because he couldn't. His mind was always hearing new ways to play, to sound, to explore. But for us, at least some of Eric's music was not lost in the air. Some of it will last as long as jazz. The music, for example, in this album.

Nat Hentoff

*Original linernotes 1964*

When Eric Dolphy arrived from Paris at Amsterdam Schiphol Airport on Friday, May 29, 1964 at 11.00 hrs, it was his third visit to Holland. The first time as a member of the John Coltrane Quintet on Sunday, November 11, 1961, the second time with the Charles Mingus Sextet on Friday, April 10, 1964.
After the Mingus tour Dolphy left to stay in Europe for some time to do concerts with local musicians because he wanted to be with his fiancée Joyce Mordecai,

who was studying modern dance in Paris. Paul Karting, who supervised the Rotterdam jazz society B-14, brought Dolphy over from Paris an May 29 for a few concerts and a radio show for station VARA in Hilversum. I was working for that station at the time, we had a small budget to do live programs once in a while on Wednesday nights. As Dolphy had to be back in Paris an Wednesday, June 3, we decided to tape the show the day before.
On Friday, May 29, after his arrival, Dolphy went to Amsterdam for a rehearsal in one of the rooms of Café De Kroon, with the trio of pianist-composer Misja Mengelberg, Jacques Schols on bass, Han Bennink on drums. Mengelberg had a quartet, but Dolphy changed places with the regular altoplayer, Piet Noordijk. This rehearsal was from 14.00 to 17.00 hrs. The next day Dolphy rehearsed with Boy Edgars Big Band where he brought some of his own compositions and arrangements.
That Saturday, May 30, there was a midnight concert at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, where Dolphy had played in April with the Mingus Sextet. After some concerts in Holland with the Mengelberg trio, Paul Karting arrived with the four musicians around 20.00 hrs at VARA studio in Hilversum an Tuesday, June 2, to record for Radio Jazz Magazine, to be aired the next day. In studio 5 was as always an especially invited small audience including a then as now well known actor Hans Veerman, and it's him who sighs the “Ah” after *“You don't know what love is”ended*. That evening Dolphy played one of his finest flute solos ever recorded. After that date Dolphy left the next morning for Paris. It was just “See you later”. On Tuesday, June 30 news reached us from Berlin that it had been “goodbye”. Philips Phonografische Industrie, now PolyGram International, bought theradio

tape from VARA. At the end I added the words that would become famous: *"When you hear music, after it's over it's gone in the air. You can never capture it again"*. Contrary to general belief, they were from the interview I did with Dolphy when he was here with Mingus an April 10.
On Wednesday, July 22 we did a live session for Radio Jazz Magazine with altoist-flutist Leo Wright, who told me the details of Dolphy's death in Berlin, which I included in the original linernotes I wrote for the album Philips named *"Last Date"*. These are the cool facts I gathered from my old note books, but let me assure you that the actual recording date was a very emotional affair music-wise.

*We cried on June 30th.*

Michiel de Ruyter
Jazz historian
Amsterdam, Holland
August 23, 1991

*Based on the recording "Last Date", Dutch director Hans Hylkema made an hour long movie which includes rare footage of Eric Dolphy and Charles Mingus. The film was produced by Akka Volta - NOS TV.*
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510 124-2

*Personnel:*
Eric Dolphy – Flute, Bass Clarinet and Alto Saxophone
Misja Mengelberg – Piano
Jacques Schols – Bass
Han Bennink – Drums





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AAD PG 899 **510 124-2**

1. **EPISTROPHY** (11:13)
(Th. Monk/K. Clarke)
Published by Intersong Basart Publ. Group.

2. **SOUTH STREET EXIT** (7:14)
(E. Dolphy)

3. **THE MADRIG SPEAKS, THE PANTHER WALKS** (4:46)
(E. Dolphy)

4. **HYPOCHRISTMUTREEFUZZ** (5:27)
(M. Mengelberg)

5. **YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT LOVE IS** (11:21)
(D. Raye/De Paul)
Published by MCA Music

6. **MISS ANN** (5:36)
(E. Dolphy)
Published by Prestige Music Co. Inc.



Sound engineer: Kees Moerings and Mr. van Heukelom.
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