

**OSCAR PETTIFORD**  
MODERN QUINTET

BETHLEHEM BCP1003



**BETHLEHEM**  
HIGH FIDELITY

# OSCAR PETTIFORD

ILLUSTRATION BY:  
BURT GOLDBLATT

BURT GOLDBLATT

Foreword & Notes From  
Original Vinyl Release



## PERSONNEL OF THE OSCAR PETTIFORD MODERN QUINTET

OSCAR PETTIFORD - Cello and Bass

JULIUS WATKINS - French Horn

CHARLIE ROUSE - Tenor Sax

DUKE JORDAN - Piano

RON JEFFERSON - Drums

# OSCAR PETTIFORD

## MODERN QUINTET

WHEN they talk about bop, especially the early history of bop, two names always predominate - Bird and Diz. Yet the first bop band on 52nd Street in New York, which was really the first bop band which could be heard by the general public, was led by Dizzy and Oscar Pettiford...

It was in 1944 when Oscar and Diz joined forces to lead a group composed of Don Byas, George Wallington and Max Roach - a group from which, incidentally, came Diz's first octave wailing of *Salt Peanuts*. And, after Dizzy left the group, Oscar stayed at the Onyx with a completely re-formed combo, and went on from there to play all the clubs on The Street.

But for all that, Oscar has never been a bop musician, although he appeared at Minton's in 1943 and worked with almost all the musicians of that era. The format of bop made little allowance for the solo bass. Just as Armstrong's trumpet upset traditional Dixieland by demanding solo time because of its particular brilliance, so the Pettiford bass (and cello) bowed and bulled its way into free time in which to be heard. That's why, as critics always pointed out, Pettiford is in the Blanton tradition, a tradition which demands the great technique, ease and a big sound.

Oscar comes by his talent naturally, or so it would seem. All eleven of his brothers and sisters play musical instruments. He started on piano in 1932, when he was ten and taught himself bass four years later. The whole family was on tour by this time. Oscar's father, a practicing doctor, had given up his practice to lead eleven kids through the south and middle-west until 1941.

The family's home base was in Minneapolis, and it was there, in

sidemen from Charlie Barnet's band. Barnet hired Oscar in January of that year, making a two-bass combination because Chubby Jackson was with his band at the time.

He only stayed five months with Barnet's band, then worked at Minton's and, finally, joined Roy Eldridge at the Onyx, where, the very next year, he and Dizzy initiated the era of bop in midtown New York. In 1945 he joined the best of the Boyd Raeburn bands, making recordings with it that featured Dizzy, Benny Harris and Serge Chaloff. Later in that same year, Duke Ellington hired him and he stayed with Duke until March, 1948. Then followed jobs and recordings with practically every name in the modern music world. Sometimes it was his own group, featuring newcomers like Erroll Garner or George Shearing; other times he worked under modern greats like Dizzy. And, except for a tenure with the Woody Herman band, it's been like that for the last six years.

Of course, what's been said above, only suggests the scope of Pettiford's activities. But it does suggest also the width of his talent. Big band, little band, bass or cello, Oscar is a singularly driving force, equally capable of an almost lyric solo for all its intensity. O.P. as most of his friends call him, is a bull on the bass, but, like that animal, he matches savage attacks with beautiful twists of his horn.

- BILL CROSS

HI-FI

# "OSCAR PETTIFORD MODERN QUINTET"



## 1. SEXTETTE (Mulligan)

You'll notice that strength in the opening chorus of *Sextette*, written by Gerry Mulligan on the first side of this LP. Also on this side, is the interesting sound that the French horn (Julius Watkins) and tenor (Charlie Rouse) get in ensemble. Rouse's solo has a wonderful, held-back feeling.

## 2. GOLDEN TOUCH (Jones)

Quincy Jones' piece, the *Golden Touch* is a pretty, swinging, fragile thing, with Oscar's cello the real Midas (if you'll remember the legend).

## 3. CABLE CAR (Pettiford)

*Cable Car* is also light and swinging with bright piano flashes by Duke Jordan.

## 4. TRICTATISM (Pettiford)

*Trictatism* means the act of pulling or drawing - pulling or drawing the audience, naturally enough. Which is just what it does do.

## 5. EDGE OF LOVE (Goode-Baker-Ables)

For those of you who are concerned about how many hands Oscar has when you listen to *Edge of Love*, there's a simple explanation-he played bass with the group and dubbed the cello part in later. Rouse's tenor is so pretty and so is Oscar's swinging but restrained Cello.

## 6. RIDES AGAIN (Pettiford)

*Rides Again* is hard-riding with a pleasant ensemble sound, a fine chorus by Rouse, good piano by Duke Jordan and tasty brushwork by drummer Ron Jefferson.

Through the album, you'll notice one predominant approach. Except for brief interludes, this is the more subdued side of the Bull's horns - bass cello - no less exciting, for that, but different enough to make this Pettiford album out of the ordinary. Suffice it to say that for me any oscar awards should be of the Pettiford variety.

- Bill Cross

---

..... THANKS FOR LISTENING! .....

---

## **REISSUE CREDITS:**

**Remastering:** John Sigmon

**Package Design:** Chris Cyran

**Transfer Engineers:** Alex Nappi, Dana Pedersen

**Copy Editor:** Dan Piccoli

**Project Assistance:** Michael Stack, Curt Frasca, Rachael Hardway

**Special Thanks:** To everyone at Naxos of America!



© & ® 2013 Courtesy of Verse Music Group LLC.  
Remastered from the original analog tapes at Verse Music Group

Sound Recordings Courtesy of Verse Music Group LLC,  
134 W 25th Street, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10001