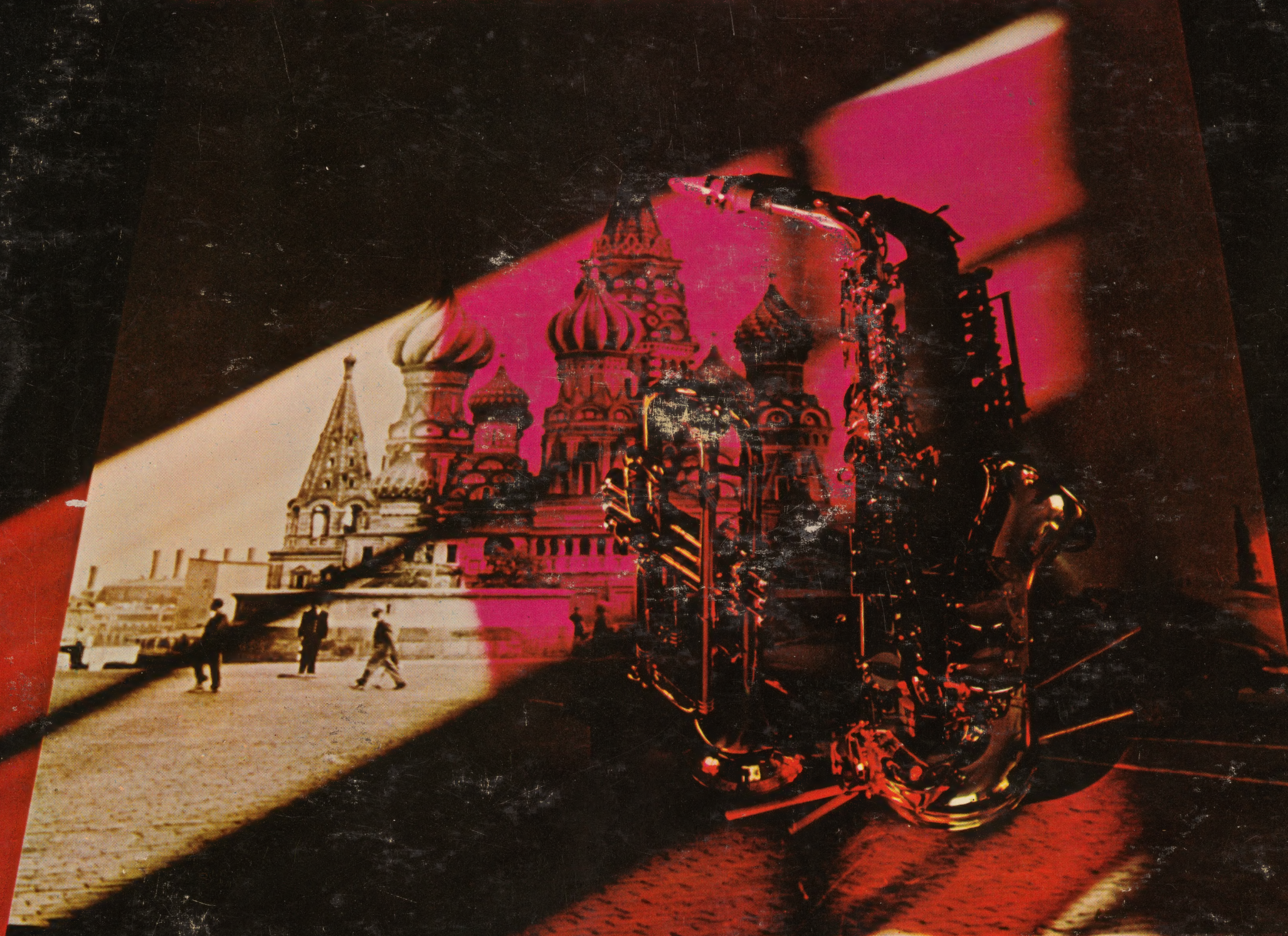


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THE VICTOR FELDMAN ALL STARS  
PLAY THE WORLD'S FIRST ALBUM OF  
**SOVIET JAZZ THEMES**



# THE VICTOR FELDMAN ALL STARS PLAY THE WORLD'S FIRST ALBUM OF SOVIET JAZZ THEMES

A/AS-19



## Side One

Recorded October 26, 1962

"RITUAL" (5:01)

"BLUE CHURCH BLUES" (7:07)

"MADRIGAL" (6:21)

VICTOR FELDMAN	Vibraphone
NAT ADDERLEY	Cornet (Courtesy of Riverside Records)
HAROLD LAND	Tenor Saxophone (Courtesy of Atlantic Records)
JOE ZAWINUL	Piano
FRANK BUTLER	Drums
BOB WHITLOCK	Bass

## Side Two

Recorded November 12, 1962

"VIC" (4:50)

"POLYUSHKO POLYE" (3:52)

"GENNADI" (5:15)

VICTOR FELDMAN	Piano and Vibraphone
HERB ELLIS	Guitar (Courtesy of Columbia Records)
CARMELL JONES	Trumpet (Courtesy of World Pacific Records)
HAROLD LAND	Tenor Saxophone
FRANK BUTLER	Drums
BOB WHITLOCK	Bass

There has never been an album quite like this before in the annals of recorded jazz.

The very existence of Soviet jazz, of artists who could play it or write it, was virtually unknown outside the USSR until 1959. That was the year when two intrepid Americans named Dwiki Mitchell and Willie Ruff, in the guise of Yale choral group members, entered the Soviet Union and let it be bruited around that they were really jazz musicians. The resultant impromptu concerts led them to discover that a cadre of young musicians existed whose interest in the American jazz world, bolstered by Voice of America broadcasts, was as deep and intense as their feeling for the music.

Three years later, on a more official and far more broadly publicized basis, Benny Goodman's band, the first American jazz orchestra of modern times to play the Soviet Union (under U.S. State Department auspices) opened May 30, 1962, at the Central Army Sports Arena in Moscow. On this tour the brilliant and versatile Victor Feldman played vibraphone in the small combo numbers; and most valuably, during the six weeks of the tour, he gained a fairly broad picture of the musical life of the Russians, the Georgians and other citizens of this endless land.

I was lucky enough to be in Moscow for the opening, and later to spend a little time in Leningrad. At a press conference I heard much talk of arranging for local jazzmen to sit in with Goodman and show him some of their music. The plans failed to materialize however, for B.G. never sought out these Soviet youths whose music amazed those of us who did get together with them. And aside from token gestures such as the use of a couple of Soviet pop songs, there was no acknowledgement in the band's program that such a phenomenon as Soviet jazz existed.

The aims of Victor Feldman's LP are, first, to compensate for this omission; second, to provide a program of modern jazz by superior soloists with plenty of blowing room; third, to point up the similarities, rather than the differences, that can be found in a comparison of jazz composition as it is conceived in Moscow, Tblisi or Leningrad vis-à-vis New York, Chicago or Los Angeles.

Soon after arriving in Moscow, we found out that home-grown jazz, supposedly tabu in the USSR, not only wasn't underground or outlawed as had long been believed, but was actually flourishing on a modest scale. It even had young, growing outlets at a Moscow Jazz Club, where students earnestly discuss the latest news about John Coltrane or Ornette Coleman, and at a couple of Youth Cafés, where music by the new Soviet jazz wave is often heard live.

Writing in *Down Beat* about a visit to the Café Aelita, I observed: "It is the closest Moscow comes to a night club . . .

serves only wine, closes at 11 p.m., and is decorated in a style that might be called Shoddy Modern, though radical by Moscow standards . . . the shocker was the trumpet player, Andre Towmosian, who is 19 but looks 14, plays with the maturity of a long-schooled musician, though in jazz he is self-taught."

I learned that Towmosian was acclaimed in the fourth annual jazz festival at Tartu, Estonia. (It was amazing enough to learn that there had been *any* Soviet jazz festival, let alone four.) He was also featured with his quartet at the Leningrad University Jazz Festival; and one of the souvenirs I brought home was a tape, given me in Leningrad, of Towmosian playing *Ritual*, the original heard in this album.

Also on tape were some of the compositions of Gennadi (Charlie) Golstain, the alto saxophonist and arranger whose apartment I visited in Leningrad. Though nicknamed for Charlie Parker, clearly he has at least two other idols, for side by side on the wall of his living room I noticed adjacent photographs of two men: Nikolai Lenin and Julian (Cannonball) Adderley.

Golstain's tapes featured him with a combo similar to the Feldman group on these sides, but he works regularly with a large modern orchestra headed by Yusef Weinstain and writes most of the band's book. He is a soloist of considerable passion, as yet uncompletely disciplined and subject to multiple influences, but his dedication is beyond cavil and his writing shows an intelligent absorption of the right influences.

"Several of the fellows in Benny's band jammed a couple of times with Gennadi at our hotel, the Astoria in Leningrad," Victor recalls, "and some of us, including Phil Woods, played with him at the University. He was eager for knowledge and information, like so many of the musicians we met."

Golstain is the composer of three of the lines in this set — *Blue Church Blues*, *Madrigal*, and *Gennadi* — as well as the arranger, or virtual recomposer, of the folk song *Polyushko Polye*. (For those curious about the first title, it should be pointed out that the church Gennadi had in mind was not Russian Orthodox but probably Southern Baptist.)

Also represented here is a young arranging student named Givi Gachechiladze, the composer of "Vic." "He lives in Kiev," says Victor, "but he's studying at Tblisi (Tiflis); and when we arrived at the airport there, he and a group of his friends were at the airport to meet us — with flowers. The next day he gave me this tune, dedicated to me and named for me."

The rapport that grew between the Soviet musicians and the Goodman sidemen showed in microcosm the kind of amity that could exist on all social levels if meetings were possible between men and women of the two countries who have common interests. All of us who tasted the hospitality of these devoted jazz musicians and students were touched by their sincerity,

their lack of political animosity (many seemed totally apolitical), and their obvious desire to discuss things shared rather than differences.

The young musicians like Towmosian, Golstain, Constantin Nosov, and Gachechiladze, none beyond their 20s and many in their teens, have not yet earned substantial recognition in their own country. It is ironic that this is the first album featuring Soviet jazz compositions that has ever been recorded, not merely in the U.S.A., but anywhere in the world. For decades American jazz was a prophet unhonored at home; Europeans were the first to give it profound critical attention. Now, in a strange reversal, Americans are the first to draw attention to a set of swinging, unpretentious Soviet jazz pieces that are still waiting to be recorded on home ground.

The group selected for these two sessions is in itself a further reflection of the "United Notions" character of jazz. Here are the works of writers in the Soviet Union, performed in America by a group under the leadership of Victor Stanley Feldman, who came to this country in 1955, at the age of 21, from his native London (the natal city also of this writer, who helped organize the sessions); and on the tracks that feature Feldman's vibes the piano is taken over by Joe Zawinul, a superb modern pianist who was born in Vienna and did not arrive here until 1959. Zawinul works regularly with the sextet of Cannonball, whose brother Nat is heard on three tracks (*Ritual*, *Madrigal*, *Blue Church Blues*.)

Harold Land and Herb Ellis, both from Texas, and Carmell Jones of Kansas are well known to the Soviet insiders, as are drummer Frank Butler from Kansas City and the Utah-born bassist Bob Whitlock.

Certainly these sides, because of the historic precedent they set, and because of the esteem in which Feldman and his colleagues are held in what used to be thought of as the borscht-and-balalaika belt, will be among the most desirable collectors' items when the first copies reach the Soviet Union. For listeners in this country it is to be hoped that they will help reinforce a concept not of the jazz-as-propaganda-weapon cliché, but the unifying image of this music gathering strength and growing in stature as part of a single world.

—LEONARD FEATHER  
(Author of *The New Encyclopedia of Jazz*)

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THE VICTOR FELDMAN ALL STARS PLAY  
THE WORLD'S FIRST ALBUM OF  
SOVIET JAZZ THEMES

A/19  
(HP-172)  
Side 2



1. VIC—4:50  
(Gachechiladze)  
Musicians Publishing (BMI)
2. POLYUSHKO POLYE—3:52  
(Arr.: Golstain)  
Model Music (ASCAP)
3. GENNADI—5:15  
(Golstain)  
Musicians Publishing (BMI)

Distributed by MGM Records

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