

# The Naming of Names: “Flamenco Sketches” or “All Blues”? Identifying the Last Two Tracks on Miles Davis’s Classic Album *Kind of Blue*

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## I: The Album

The official release date of the new Miles Davis album *Kind of Blue* was 17 August 1959. People waited in line at record stores to buy it on the day it appeared.<sup>1</sup> The album sold very well from its first day and received good reviews in the music magazines. *Metronome* found the playing “concise and pointed” and the ensemble “moving”; *Down Beat* called the record “remarkable,” “an album of extreme beauty and sensitivity,” and ended its review by stating “This is the soul of Miles Davis, and it’s a beautiful soul.”<sup>2</sup> *Kind of Blue* has sold increasingly well ever since. It is still selling thousands of copies a week and by now has sold over four million copies in the United States alone.<sup>3</sup> In 2005, Columbia/Legacy released a CD/DVD version of the album. It is the best-selling jazz album in the Columbia Records catalogue, and at the end of the twentieth century, it was voted one of the ten best albums ever produced.<sup>4</sup> In an English poll conducted at that time, it came out at the very top of the “50 best recordings of the 20th century.”<sup>5</sup> The definition of a classic is something of both the highest excellence and enduring significance, and *Kind of Blue* is indubitably a classic.<sup>6</sup>

Two entire books have been written about the jazz world’s most famous recording.<sup>7</sup> The authors of these books are music enthusiasts and journalists, but not educated musicians. This becomes painfully clear when one reads the books carefully, for both contain many elementary errors of musical fact and analysis. Nonetheless, the authors’ love of the music and admiration of the men who made it shine through. Both books were published in 2000, and they have oddly similar titles. Ashley Kahn is a freelance journalist. His title is *Kind of Blue: The Making of the Miles Davis Masterpiece*. The second book is by Eric Nisenson and is

titled *The Making of Kind of Blue: Miles Davis and His Masterpiece*.<sup>8</sup> Nisenson spent some time with Miles Davis in his last years and wrote several books on jazz figures, including Davis, John Coltrane, and Sonny Rollins. Tragically, Nisenson succumbed to leukemia in 2003, while still in his fifties.

Nisenson writes lovingly about the man and the music and about the events leading up to and the later consequences of the making of the album. The importance of the album to him personally and his humility in the face of it are touching. His technical discussion of modes in music, however, is either misprinted or erroneous, and his actual writing about the music on the album is surprisingly thin. One other important misunderstanding that informs the book is Nisenson's interpretation of an event in Davis's early life. In his autobiography, Davis recalled walking home from church when he was six "and they were playing these bad gospels." He said that he tried to get that kind of feeling on *Kind of Blue*.<sup>9</sup> Nisenson thinks that when Davis said "bad," he meant bad or evil. He interprets the expression as "ghostly," "haunting" (137), "dark," and "haunted" (210). And yet the autobiography is full of evidence that when Davis said "bad," he meant it in the old hip sense of "good," "profound," or "excellent." A few examples will suffice:

Everybody was raving about Paul [Chambers], who was from Detroit. When I heard him I *knew* he was a bad motherfucker.

Trane was the only one who knew all the tunes, and I couldn't risk having nobody who didn't know the tunes. But after we started playing together for a while, I knew that this guy was a bad motherfucker who was just the voice I needed on tenor.

Now we had Trane on sax, Philly Joe on drums, Red Garland on piano, Paul Chambers on bass, and myself on trumpet. And faster than I could have imagined, the music that we were playing together was just unbelievable. It was so bad that it used to send chills through me at night.

[I] had a great group . . . I was playing my horn and leading the baddest band in the business.<sup>10</sup>

Kahn's book is based on a more thorough look at the history and documentation. He reproduces some of the banter that took place in the studio during the sessions, includes some of the photographs of the second session, and digs up many more details surrounding the making of the album. However, some basic musical material is completely

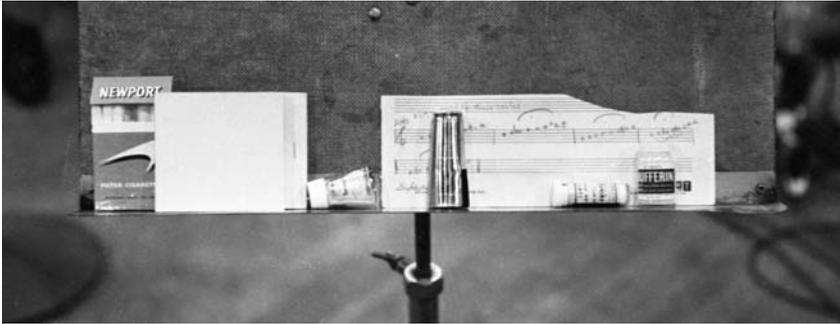


Figure 1. Bill Evans's scale sketches for recording session of *Kind of Blue*. Photo: Fred Plaut, Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, Frederick and Rose Plaut Archives, Yale University.

inaccurate. Kahn writes that a jazz melody is “basically a line of notes, each a root to a matching chord” (66), which is clearly wrong. He also states that “the twelve modes of the Western musical tradition” are “all permutations of the basic major scale” (70), a statement that is also incorrect. Explaining a photograph (fig. 1) of the scales written out by Bill Evans for Adderley as a guide on “Flamenco Sketches,” Kahn describes the scales as “C Ionian, A-flat Mixolydian, B-flat Major 7th, D Phrygian and G Aeolian.” Perhaps he got this list from somewhere else, for “B-flat Major 7th” is not a scale, and the scales shown in the photograph are actually an A scale (probably A major, though not all of the notes are visible in the photograph because of the placement of Adderley’s reed cap), C Dorian, G major, the so-called Jewish or Middle Eastern scale on B (B to B, with D-sharp and F-sharp),<sup>11</sup> and probably—again some notes are obscured—E minor.<sup>12</sup> In addition, he has failed to note several other things: first and foremost that the scales are written for alto saxophone, which is a transposing instrument and built in E-flat. (The photo clearly shows the word *alto* at the top left.) Kahn had a six-person “research, transcription, and editing team,” but not, apparently, anyone who could check some of these basic musical items. Though some of the best books on many subjects are written by nonexperts, it is disturbing that a publisher would not hire at least one person for the author’s research team who is versed in the basic elements of his subject.

It is also disturbing to find ellipsis points deliberately obscuring important dialogue. Kahn reproduces one exchange between the producer in the control booth and Davis on the soundstage just before the

taping of “Blue in Green.” The producer is Irving Townsend. Here is the exchange as reproduced by Kahn:

IT: Just you four guys on this, right, Miles?

MD: Five . . . No, why don't you play?

Kahn suggests that this means that Davis is issuing a “last-second invitation to Coltrane to play on a tune presumably intended as a quartet piece.” But in fact the ellipsis points hide the following words: “Adderley lays out on this piece.” So the exchange has a different meaning. Townsend misspoke when he said, “Just you four guys,” because he was unused to dealing with a *sextet* of players. More conventional combos have five players, so, since he knew that one person was laying out, he refers to “four guys.” Davis corrects him immediately, reminds him that Adderley is laying out, and then insists to Coltrane that he play. The result is the gem that is Coltrane’s solo at the heart of the “Blue in Green” palindrome.

This kind of mistake leaves the reader with misgivings. How many other such inaccuracies are there?<sup>13</sup> All of this leads to one other really complex question, which involves the naming of the last two pieces on the album, “All Blues” and “Flamenco Sketches.” The track named “All Blues” on all modern recordings (penultimate track) is in a moderate tempo, with a somewhat urgent feel, a constantly repeated bass figure, and a distinctive piano tremolo. It is also in triple meter, or in the special kind of triple meter that has a larger duple overlay, which can be rendered in 6/8 or 6/4 time. “Flamenco Sketches” is very slow and pensive and in 4/4 time. I would like to explore the possibility that these titles are the wrong way around.<sup>14</sup>

The facts are these. First, like many jazz musicians, Miles Davis did not think very much about titles until after the tunes were recorded. Some of his titles are humorous: for his reworking of George Shearing’s “Conception” for *Birth of the Cool*, Davis chose the title “Deception.” Another tune of his, based on Thelonious Monk’s “Well You Needn’t,” is called “I Didn’t.” And even the lead tune for *Kind of Blue*, “So What,” is apparently a reference to a favorite expression of Davis’s, with the rhythm of the words reflected in the repeated “LONG-short” phrase in the piano soon after the beginning. For other titles, he didn’t care (one is named “Call It Anythin”), or he punned with the name of his girlfriend (“Lazy Susan”), or just named the tune after his producer at the time (“Teo”). Fact 2: The tape log for the second recording session clearly identifies (in a later addition, but in Bill Evans’s own hand) the

first piece at the session for Side 2 of the album as “Sketches” and the second as “All Blues.”<sup>15</sup> Fact 3: Two memos from Townsend show the order on the second side of the final album as “Flamenco Sketches” first and “All Blues” second. (Kahn is again incorrect in stating that the right order is on the first memo and the wrong order on the second when in fact both memos show the same order, as the ringed numerals next to the titles clearly indicate.)<sup>16</sup> Fact 4: A third memo, entitled “Mastering Instructions” (typed, dated 5 May 1959, and addressed to “F. Kershaw” – Floyd Kershaw, production coordination manager at Columbia) clearly lists the order of the tracks on Side 2 as first “Flamenco Sketches” and second “All Blues.” Fact 5: Two months after the album was released, Teo Macero, who had taken over the production process for Columbia from Townsend, ordered the titles to be *reversed* on future albums. “I asked him [Miles] specifically, ‘What’s the name of that tune?’” said Macero later. “And I thought he gave me the correct title. So when it comes out, he says, ‘No, that’s not the way it goes.’”<sup>17</sup> However, we know that Davis could be cavalier about titles; we know that he was almost never involved in the editing process for his recordings; we know that he rarely listened to the albums after they were released; and we also know that his memory could be selective.<sup>18</sup> For example, in his autobiography he claims credit for “Blue in Green”: “Some people went around saying that Bill was cocreator of the music of *Kind of Blue*. That isn’t true; it’s all mine.” But Bill Evans was quite firm about his own authorship of “Blue in Green.”<sup>19</sup> He stated many times that he had written it and uncharacteristically insisted on the claim: “Actually it’s my tune . . . I went home and wrote ‘Blue in Green.’” “I sketched out ‘Blue in Green,’ which was my tune.” And Orrin Keepnews, the producer of Bill Evans’s next recording, said, “Bill seldom insisted I do anything, but he said I had to list him [as composer of ‘Blue in Green’].”<sup>20</sup> Evans also made a point of recording the tune on his own trio’s first recording date, only a few months after the release of *Kind of Blue*. (Bill Evans Trio, *Portrait in Jazz*, Riverside, 12-315, recorded 28 December 1959). And he recorded it again fifteen years later on an album bearing the name of the tune as its title (*Blue in Green*, Milestone, M-9185, 1974).<sup>21</sup> So Macero’s memory of Davis saying, “No, that’s not the way it goes,” which is anyway ambiguous, is by no means definitive.

Let us continue with the known facts. Recordings in Europe continued to put the titles on Side 2 (the whole of the side is taken up with the two tracks) in the original order: “Flamenco Sketches” first and “All Blues” second, though the order of the *music* stayed the same.<sup>22</sup> Fontana, the Italian subsidiary of Columbia, advertised *King of Blue*

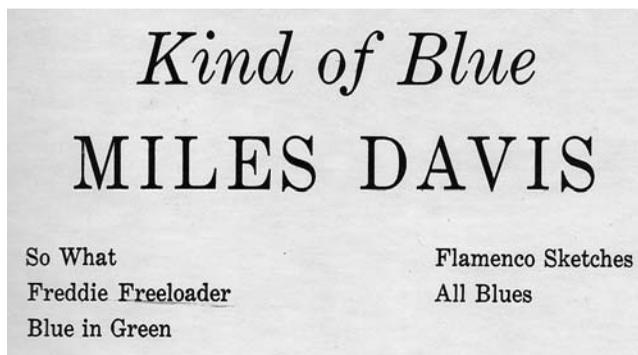


Figure 2. Title sequence from back of LP jacket of *Kind of Blue*. Columbia, KCS 8163, author's private collection.

(which would itself be an interesting title, both for Davis and for the album) showing the following order for the LP: “So What,” “Freddie Freeloader,” “Blue in Green,” “Flamenco Sketches,” and “All Blues.” A Danish advertisement for the record gave the same order.<sup>23</sup> By now, since Macero had switched the titles on some domestic album covers, some American musicians and critics were beginning to refer to the two pieces by their new names.<sup>24</sup> However, many later Columbia releases kept the original order. The LP, whose title sequence is shown in figure 2, is a rerelease of the original album, dating from the 1970s.

It is important to note that there are other facts that go against my hypothesis. Davis told an interviewer that he wrote “All Blues” in 4/4 but changed it at the last moment to 3/4.<sup>25</sup> The meter 3/4 is a possible interpretation of the 6/4 of “All Blues” as it is now listed, but not of the meter of “Flamenco Sketches.” Bill Evans later referred to a piece with five “levels” (scales or modes) on the album and said that he wrote them out “for the guys.” “That was all little sketches I made.” (Evans’s reference to “little sketches”—presumably the five scales in the photograph—doesn’t necessarily mean he is referring to the tune later called “Flamenco Sketches,” though it would be an odd coincidence.) It should be noted that the interview in which he made these comments took place twenty years after the event.<sup>26</sup>

A few more inherent musical observations must be made. The meter of a flamenco can be of many different kinds, but there is a frequent occurrence of cross-rhythm or two against three. This kind of cross-rhythm occurs commonly in a compound meter such as 6/8 or 6/4, but rarely in a duple meter like 4/4. Second, though some flamencos are slow, they are certainly not as slow as the piece on *Kind of Blue* currently labeled “Flamenco Sketches” (M.M. = 56). Third,

one of the most salient characteristics of flamenco is the strummed guitar. Nothing in the piece now known as “Flamenco Sketches” would suggest a strummed guitar; however, the track known as “All Blues” features the distinctive tremolo on piano that would be the only way strumming could be reproduced by the musicians on *Kind of Blue*.

One should note that Bill Evans’s liner notes on the original (pre-Macero) LP state the following: “‘Flamenco Sketches’ is a 6/8 12-measure blues form that produces its mood through only a few modal changes and Miles Davis’s free melodic conception. ‘All Blues’ is a series of five scales, each to be played as long as the soloist wishes until he has completed the series.” The titles in the liner notes were then also reversed on most later releases of the album (but not, for example, on the LP rerelease shown in figure 2 or on the CD by Columbia Jazz Masterpieces CK 40579, “digitally remastered directly from the original analog tapes”) to conform to the title switch ordered by Teo Macero, and Kahn changes the titles in his book, too (without explanation or footnote). One would certainly think that Evans, deeply involved in the conception of the album, at least cocreator of some of the music on it, and pianist on four of the tracks (including the two in question), would know what he was talking about. Indeed, his original handwritten notes clearly show that he identifies the 6/8 piece as “Flamenco Sketches” and the piece with five scales as “All Blues”—actually, he writes “All Blue” (fig. 3).<sup>27</sup>

There are several other differences between the handwritten and the first published versions of the notes, which are reproduced in the

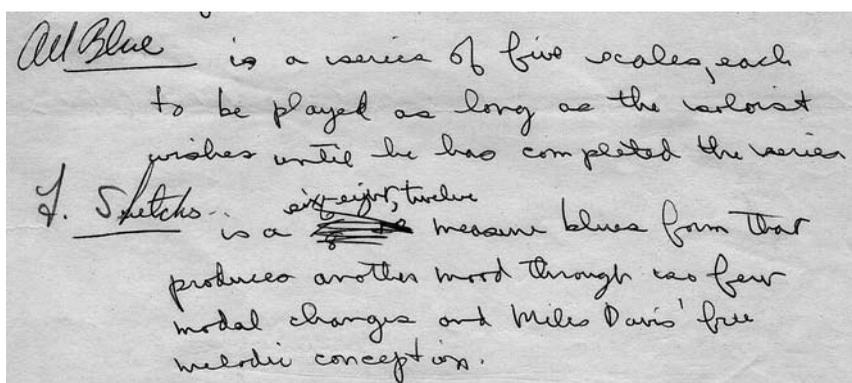


Figure 3. Detail of the manuscript of Bill Evans’s liner notes for *Kind of Blue*. Teo Macero Collection, 1949–92, New York Public Library, Music Division. Reproduced with kind permission of Sony Music Entertainment, Inc.

second part of this article). It is likely that Evans, or the producer, edited the notes between manuscript and printing, perhaps in the proof stage. A close look at the manuscript reveals a second stage of handwriting on the notes. The titles of the pieces preceding the musical comments were filled in later. A short line was simply drawn in the first draft for each piece, and the titles written over the lines at a later date. Even these are revealing. “So What,” “F. Sketches,” and “F. Freeloader” are clear, but “All Blues” is written as “All Blue,” and it looks as though the title “In Green” had the initial word “Blue” added to it afterward.<sup>28</sup> In all cases, however, Evans is very clear about which piece is which. The identification is also corroborated by the *order* of the comments on the published liner notes: “So What,” “Freddie Freeloader,” “Blue in Green,” “Flamenco Sketches,” and finally “All Blues.”<sup>29</sup>

There is also something curious in the photograph (fig. 1) of the written-out scales that are (more or less) the ones that are used for what is now known as “Flamenco Sketches.” The upper right-hand corner of the music paper, *where the title of the piece might have been written*, is missing. This is of course a great pity, and one wonders at what stage this occurred, though it is possible the paper was simply torn when Evans cut or tore out the fragment to give it to Adderley. (The piece of music paper contains only three staves, so Evans probably wrote out the five scales in the different keys for “the guys”—in E-flat for Adderley, at concert pitch for Chambers, and in B-flat for Coltrane and Davis—on one full sheet of paper and tore off the relevant parts for each player.)<sup>30</sup> As we can also see from the photograph, Evans wrote above the music: “Play in sound of these scales.” He did not write “Play these scales,” which might in any case have been redundant. It is the *sound* of the scales that Evans wanted—the quality or color that the particular interval patterns make in each case, the elements that actually distinguish each one as a mode.<sup>31</sup>

If my hypothesis is right, and the real title of the strumming, medium-tempo, 6/4-meter piece on *Kind of Blue* is “Flamenco Sketches,” then the real name of the very slow 4/4 piece at the end of the album is “All Blues.” This would make a great deal of sense, since this piece is the most adventurous modal experiment on the album. This is the piece for which Evans and Davis came up with five different scales on which the musicians were to improvise—the five scales pictured in figure 1. Since both pieces were recorded on that day, this does not help us sort out the titles. It does, however, mean that when Evans talks about going by Davis’s apartment in the morning before the date—the session was at 2:30 in the afternoon—and working on the five scales, he is referring to the second session (22 April). Again Kahn

has vitiated the evidence by supplying a misleading editorial insertion. What Kahn has printed for Evans's words is:

That morning before the [first session] date I went by  
[Miles's] apartment.

What Evans actually said was:

I think that morning before the day I went by his apartment.<sup>32</sup>

"The day" being the one on which those two tunes were recorded (22 April 1959), *not* the first session. So let us assume that Evans wrote out and brought in the five scales pictured in the photograph (it is certainly his handwriting). As outlined above, the scales on that small piece of music paper are an A scale (probably A major), C Dorian, G major, the "Middle Eastern" scale on B (B to B, with D-sharp and F-sharp), and an E scale, probably E Dorian. Remember that these are written out for E-flat alto saxophone, so in concert pitch those scales would be: C major, E-flat Dorian, B-flat major, D "Middle-Eastern," and G minor. What seems to have escaped Kahn's (and apparently everyone else's) attention, however, is that these are not the scales actually played on the recording. Just to make this as clear as possible, here is a comparison, with the differences in bold:

Scales on Adderley's music stand transposed to concert pitch:

C Major    **E-flat Dorian**            B-flat Major    **D "Eastern"**            G Dorian

Scales actually played on the recording of *Kind of Blue*:

C Major    **A-flat Mixolydian**    B-flat Major    **D "Eastern"/Phrygian**<sup>33</sup>    G Dorian

The most notable difference is in the second scale. The only possible explanations for this are (1) during the recording session, Evans or Davis or both decided to change the second scale; (2) Evans wrote it out incorrectly; or (3) the musicians all played it incorrectly. The first of these explanations is clearly the most likely.<sup>34</sup>

As for the idea that this last piece on the album might more properly be called "All Blues," let us think about the appropriateness of this title. Just as "Flamenco Sketches" is a far more fitting title for a medium-tempo piece in 6/4 with piano tremolo, so "All Blues" is a better title for a slow piece that uses five different scales, for it suggests that however new the idea of using modes might be, these scales are *all* blue, or at the very least they are all "kind of blue."

It's intriguing to note how we all can be persuaded to hear things in music. When Mozart's Symphony No. 37 was heard in the nineteenth century, it was regarded as typical of Mozart's mature style. Later it was discovered that the symphony was actually by Michael Haydn and that Mozart had written only a slow introduction to the first movement, whereupon critics could hear immediately that it was not up to Mozart's standard.<sup>35</sup> Many critics and listeners have managed to hear a "Spanish" element in the very slow 4/4 piece at the end of *Kind of Blue* that utilizes five different scales. One author writes of the "Spanish flavor" of the fourth mode in the piece.<sup>36</sup> Another notices its "latinate beat," though he is obviously listening very hard, for he says that "it seems to be implied rather than stated."<sup>37</sup> Kahn speaks of "Iberian flavor."<sup>38</sup> Nisenson, quoting Jelly Roll Morton about something different, uses the phrase "Spanish tinge."<sup>39</sup> Kahn also quotes composer, conductor, and all-around multicultural musician David Amram as saying, "The flamenco scale is actually the same as the *hijaz*."<sup>40</sup> Curiously, although flamenco does utilize the Phrygian scale, a more characteristic sound is that of the so-called Middle Eastern scale, or *maqam hijaz*, the scale that appears on Adderley's music paper but is *not* used in the recording.<sup>41</sup> Perhaps if people start listening closely to *Kind of Blue* with the reversed titles in mind, they will hear far more flamenco or "Spanish flavor" in the second-to-last piece on the album than in the last.

## II: The Liner Notes

Central to the question of the naming of the two last tracks on *Kind of Blue* are the liner notes written for the album by Bill Evans. The published version of the notes as they appeared with the original LP (Columbia, CL 1355 and CS 8163 [stereo]) is given below. The published version is then given in a side-by-side comparison with the notes as they appear in Bill Evans's own hand on pages preserved in the Teo Macero Collection of the New York Public Library.

The responsibility for editing Evans's manuscript for the album cover would presumably have been assumed by Irving Townsend, Columbia's producer for *Kind of Blue*. Close analysis also suggests Townsend as the editor rather than Evans himself, since one of the emendations undermines the rhetorical intent of the original. These editorial changes are of several kinds. First, the published liner notes have been provided with a title that is not in the manuscript. Second, one finds simple grammatical corrections, or numerals substituted for spelled-out numbers, e.g., "6/8" for "six-eight." Then there are rhetorical

and expressive changes. Finally, there is at the end one (unfortunate) wholesale deletion.

In the first, quite striking change, Townsend has provided the notes with a title: “Improvisation in Jazz.” Titles for liner notes were unusual in the 1950s. The effect of this title, followed by the phrase “by Bill Evans,” is to give the impression that the notes are an essay rather than a simple commentary on the music. (The title has been omitted from the reprinting of the notes in Tom Piazza’s liner-note collection *Setting the Tempo*, which is symbolic of how little attention has been paid to its importance.)<sup>42</sup> This impression (of the notes being an essay) adds a level of intellectual prestige to the notes and therefore to the album as a whole.

In the first paragraph, where Evans refers to Japanese brush painting, Townsend has changed “hand” to “hands,” thinking perhaps that since the subject of the sentence is plural—“These artists must practice a particular discipline, that of allowing the idea to express itself in communication with their hands in such a direct way that deliberation cannot interfere”—that they must collectively have more than one hand. Evans perhaps had in mind the single hand of each artist as he paints. At the end of the second paragraph, the original’s “which escapes contemplation” has been changed to “that escapes explanation.” This is not the place to enter into a discussion of the differing grammatical properties of “that” and “which,” but suffice it to say that either may be defended in this context. Townsend’s “explanation” is perhaps clearer though faintly less poetic than Evans’s “contemplation”: “it is said that those who see well find something captured that escapes explanation.”

In the third paragraph, Evans has corrected his own “experiments” to “disciplines,” which makes the musicians sound more intellectually rigorous and resonates more strongly with the Zen image invoked at the outset: “This conviction that direct deed is the most meaningful reflection, I believe, has prompted the evolution of the extremely severe and unique disciplines of the jazz or improvising musician.” Evans’s own addition of the words “and unique” also tends to burnish the image of the performers.

The next two paragraphs are unchanged. At the beginning of the sixth paragraph, Townsend omits “I know that,” shifting the emphasis from Evans to Davis: “[I know that] Miles conceived these settings only hours before the recording dates . . .” Evans himself replaced “the important portions of these selections” with “these performances,” which was certainly a wise choice: “Therefore, you will hear something close to pure spontaneity in these performances.” Townsend also added quotation marks to “take,” thinking, presumably, that the word is a term of

art in the field of recording technology: “and I think without exception the first complete performance of each was a ‘take’.”

The sentence that introduces the musical comments on each track reads in the original: “The following are brief sketches of the formal character of the five settings.” The word “formal” Evans added himself with a caret (for some reason he wrote the word twice). In the published version, the introduction reads: “Briefly, the formal character of the five settings are” followed by a colon. The principal change here involves the suppression of the word “sketches”—a sensible edit given that the word appears twice elsewhere in the notes. Evans, stressing the spontaneity of the performances, writes that Davis “arrived with sketches” for the musicians; also, one of the tracks has “sketches” in the title. But another result of Townsend’s edit is the following of a singular noun with a plural verb (“the formal character . . . are”), understandable, since “are” is immediately preceded by the plural noun “settings,” though careless.

Most of the changes in the musical comments are insignificant, though these display considerable care on Townsend’s part, for example, adding the words “following a 4-measure introduction” to the notes on “Blue in Green,” but some warrant mention. Evans’s original name for one of the tunes is “All Blue” rather than “All Blues.” And Evans describes the basis of “Blue in Green” as a “five-measure circular form,” whereas Townsend has changed this to a “10-measure circular form.” Both could be construed as correct, for the form of “Blue in Green” involves a ten-measure chorus that is based on a five-measure harmonic scheme that is repeated. Townsend’s explanation is easier to follow in the listening; Evans’s is more accurate from the musical point of view. (The tune is circular because its last measures link to its first by means of a circle of fifths.) It is also significant that the original notes for “F. Freeloader” contain the word “another”: “another twelve-measure blues form.” The reason that Evans included this word is that the order in which the pieces are described in his notes has “Freddie Freeloader” occurring last, after “Flamenco [Evans again just writes F.] Sketches.”<sup>43</sup> Since he has described “Flamenco Sketches” as a twelve-measure blues form, it makes sense to write “another” for “Freddie.” But the order of the pieces on the album changed later, putting “Freddie Freeloader” as the second track on Side 1, before “Flamenco Sketches,” which occurs on Side 2, so the word was no longer necessary.

The order in which Evans has described the pieces is itself important: “So What,” “Blue in Green,” “All Blue,” “F. Sketches,” “F. Freeloader.” This is not the order in which the tracks appear on the album, nor is it the order in which the tracks were recorded. Recording order was as follows: “Freddie Freeloader,” “So What,” “Blue in Green,”

“Flamenco Sketches,” “All Blue[s].” However, if the hypothesis put forward here is correct, and the names of “Flamenco Sketches” and “All Blues” have been improperly reversed, then the only change from *recording order* to intended finished product (according to Evans’s handwritten notes) would have been to place “Freddie Freeloader” last instead of first.<sup>44</sup> At the stage of writing the notes by hand, Evans must have assumed or been told that this would be the order. The order in which he writes the notes, therefore, would tend to support the hypothesis that the names for “All Blues” and “Flamenco Sketches” are now incorrect on modern recordings.

The handwritten notes show clearly that Evans added the names of the pieces to his musical descriptions at a later stage. In the first stage, he simply drew short underlines where the names should go. This might give credence to the view that he himself was confused about the names. However, it is impossible to imagine a musician with the training and experience of Bill Evans not noticing that he was giving a piece described as being in 6/8 meter the name “Flamenco Sketches” and a piece described as “a series of five scales” the name “All Blue.”

At the head of the notes, Evans also later wrote the title of the album, “Kind of Blue,” the name of the leader, “Miles Davis,” and the word “Original,” presumably signifying that he knew that his notes would be edited or had already been edited for publication.

The final decision made by the producer was to omit Evans’s final sentence: “Perhaps those who hear well will find something captured which escapes contemplation.” This was certainly a misjudgment. Kahn justifies the decision and characterizes the sentence as “an echo of a previous sentence.” (Kahn also writes that Townsend edited the notes “hardly at all” and states that the manuscript “bears no album or track titles.”)<sup>45</sup> The whole point of the last sentence, however, is that it is an echo. Evans began his essay with two paragraphs about Japanese brush painting, intending to draw a parallel between the immediacy and spontaneity of that art and the immediacy and spontaneity of musical improvisation. The suppressed sentence refers directly back to a sentence in the second paragraph: “It is said that those who see well find something captured which escapes contemplation.” Evans’s final sentence was to read: “Perhaps those who hear well will find something captured which escapes contemplation.” The sentence ties the whole essay together, clinches the parallel that Evans draws between Japanese brush painting and musical improvisation, and brings the ending back to the beginning, in the same kind of circular form that Evans brought to his exquisite composition “Blue in Green,” which lies at the heart of *Kind of Blue*.

*Published Version: The Liner Notes from the LP  
as Originally Released*

IMPROVISATION IN JAZZ

by Bill Evans

There is a Japanese visual art in which the artist is forced to be spontaneous. He must paint on a thin stretched parchment with a special brush and black water paint in such a way that an unnatural or interrupted stroke will destroy the line or break through the parchment. Erasures or changes are impossible. These artists must practice a particular discipline, that of allowing the idea to express itself in communication with their hands in such a direct way that deliberation cannot interfere.

The resulting pictures lack the complex composition and textures of ordinary painting, but it is said that those who see well find something captured that escapes explanation.

This conviction that direct deed is the most meaningful reflection, I believe, has prompted the evolution of the extremely severe and unique disciplines of the jazz or improvising musician.

Group improvisation is a further challenge. Aside from the weighty technical problem of collective coherent thinking, there is the very human, even social need for sympathy from all members to bend for the common result. This most difficult problem, I think, is beautifully met and solved on this recording.

As the painter needs his framework of parchment, the improvising musical group needs its framework in time. Miles Davis presents here frameworks which are exquisite in their simplicity and yet contain all that is necessary to stimulate performance with a sure reference to the primary conception.

Miles conceived these settings only hours before the recording dates and arrived with sketches which indicated to the group what was to be played. Therefore, you will hear something close to pure spontaneity in these performances. The group had never played these pieces prior to the recordings and I think without exception the first complete performance of each was a "take."

Although it is not uncommon for a jazz musician to be expected to improvise on new material at a recording session, the character of these pieces represents a particular challenge.

Briefly, the formal character of the five settings are:

*So What* is a simple figure based on 16 measures of one scale, 8 of another and 8 more of the first, following a piano and bass introduction in free rhythmic style. *Freddie Freeloader* is a 12-measure blues form

given new personality by effective melodic and rhythmic simplicity. *Blue in Green* is a 10-measure circular form following a 4-measure introduction, and played by soloists in various augmentation and diminution of time values. *Flamenco Sketches* is a 6/8 12-measure blues form that produces its mood through only a few modal changes and Miles Davis' free melodic conception. *All Blues* is a series of five scales, each to be played as long as the soloist wishes until he has completed the series.

*A Comparison between the Published Version of the Notes on the LP and Bill Evans's Handwritten Original*

The "Published Version" column gives the liner notes as they appeared with the original LP and its reissues. The "Original Version" column reproduces the notes from the manuscript written by Bill Evans himself. **Bold** is used to indicate places where the original differs from the published version and to describe the emendations. Underscores were made by Evans. Corrections in Evans's own hand are indicated in brackets.

*Published Version: The Liner Notes from the LP*

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*Original Version: The Handwritten Notes by Bill Evans*

**Kind of Blue** **Original**  
**Miles Davis**

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*The resulting pictures lack the complex composition and textures of ordinary painting, but it is said that those who see well find something captured **which** escapes **contemplation**.*

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Miles conceived these settings only hours before the recording dates and arrived with sketches which indicated to the group what was to be played. Therefore, you will hear something close to pure spontaneity in these performances. The group had never played these pieces prior to the recordings and I think without exception the first complete performance of each was a "take."

*This conviction that direct deed is the most meaningful reflection, I believe, has prompted the evolution of the extremely severe and unique disciplines of the jazz or improvising musician. ["and unique" added with a caret; "experiments" crossed out before "disciplines"]*

*Group improvisation is a further challenge. Aside from the weighty technical problem of collective coherent thinking, there is the very human, even social need for sympathy from all members to bend for the common result. This most difficult problem, I think, is beautifully met and solved on this recording.*

*As the painter needs his framework of parchment, the improvising musical group needs its framework in time. Miles Davis presents here frameworks which are exquisite in their simplicity and yet contain all that is necessary to stimulate performance with a sure reference to the primary conception.*

**I know that** Miles conceived these settings only hours before the recording dates and arrived with sketches which indicated to the group what was to be played. Therefore, you will hear something close to pure spontaneity in these performances. **["se" added to "the"; "important portions of these selections" crossed out]** *The group had never played these pieces prior to the recordings and I think without exception the first complete performance of each was a take. ["take" without quotation marks]*

Although it is not uncommon for a jazz musician to be expected to improvise on new material at a recording session, the character of these pieces represents a particular challenge. Briefly, the formal character of the five settings are:

*So What* is a simple figure based on 16 measures of one scale, 8 of another and 8 more of the first, following a piano and bass introduction in free rhythmic style. *Freddie Freeloader* is a 12-measure blues form given new personality by effective melodic and rhythmic simplicity. *Blue in Green* is a 10-measure circular form following a 4-measure introduction, and played by soloists in various augmentation and diminution of time values. *Flamenco Sketches* is a 6/8 12-measure blues form that produces its mood through only a few modal changes and Miles Davis' free melodic conception. *All Blues* is a series of five scales, each to be played as long as the soloist wishes until he has completed the series.

*Although it is not uncommon for a jazz musician to be expected to improvise on new material at a recording session, the character of these pieces represents a particular challenge.*

**["To illustrate the" crossed out]  
The following are brief sketches of the formal character of the five settings. ["formal" added twice with a caret and in parentheses]**

*So What* is a simple figure based on sixteen measures of one scale, eight of another and eight more of the first [no comma] following a piano [no "and"] bass introduction in free rhythmic style.

*Blue in Green* is a five ["four" crossed out] measure circular form played by soloists in various augmentation and diminution of time values.

*All Blue* is a series of five scales, each to be played as long as the soloist wishes until he has completed the series.

*F. Sketches* is a six-eight, twelve ["6/8 12" crossed out] measure blues form that produces another mood through so few modal changes and Miles Davis' free melodic conception.

*F. Freeloader* is another twelve measure blues form given new personality by effective melodic and rhythmic simplicity. ["melodic and rhythmic" added with a caret] Perhaps those who hear well will find something captured which escapes contemplation.

**Bill Evans**

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## Notes

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1. Ashley Kahn, *Kind of Blue: The Making of the Miles Davis Masterpiece* (New York: Da Capo, 2000), 157.
2. *Metronome*, October 1959, 29; *Down Beat*, 1 October 1959, 28. In the early 1990s, David Rosenthal wrote, “Thirty years after it was recorded, *Kind of Blue* remains, for many, Miles’s greatest single achievement.” See David H. Rosenthal, *Hard Bop: Jazz and Black Music 1955–1965* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 144.
3. Certified as quadruple platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America on October 7, 2008; [http://www.riaa.com/goldandplatinumdata.php?content\\_selector=gold-platinum-searchable-database](http://www.riaa.com/goldandplatinumdata.php?content_selector=gold-platinum-searchable-database).
4. John Szwed, *So What: The Life of Miles Davis* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002), 177; Eric Nisenson, *Miles Davis and His Masterpiece: The Making of Kind of Blue* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), ix.
5. *Independent*, 1999; cited in Raymond Horricks, *Miles Davis/John Coltrane: The Good the Bad and the Experimental* (Worthing, UK: Owlett, 2001), 19.
6. Davis’s albums continue to sell at remarkable rates. His reputation is higher now than it was during his lifetime: more than two-thirds of the Grammys his records have been awarded have been posthumous. Since 1996, deluxe boxed sets and albums full of outtakes have been disseminating every note he played. In 2005, Columbia/Legacy marked the fiftieth anniversary of his signing to the company by a string of releases, including the new *Kind of Blue* package, rereleases of *A Tribute to Jack Johnson* and *My Funny Valentine*, seven albums of material from 1963 to 1964, and a six-CD set of *The Cellar Door Sessions* from 1970. There have since been a “deluxe” edition of *Kind of Blue* and the beginning of a “bootleg” series.
7. Kahn, *Kind of Blue*; Nisenson, *Miles Davis and His Masterpiece*.
8. The fact that the titles are so similar, that neither book mentions the other, and that Kahn studiously avoids mentioning any of Nisenson’s previous books does give a strange kind of *Newsweek v. Time* quality to the whole affair. The “masterpiece” concept in jazz has been challenged. See Eric Hobsbawm, *The Jazz Scene* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1959), 137: “The ‘work of art’ which is particularly appreciated we call a masterpiece, a category wholly independent of performance. . . . Jazz simply does not function this way. Its art is not reproduced, but created, and exists only at the moment of creation.” Hobsbawm’s chapter “The Musical Achievement” is reprinted in *Reading Jazz: A Gathering of Autobiography, Reportage, and Criticism from 1919 to Now*,

ed. Robert Gottlieb (New York: Pantheon, 1996), 810–18. Hobsbawm does not address the question of jazz recordings. Albin Zak has ably discussed the ontology of recordings in his *The Poetics of Rock: Cutting Tracks, Making Records* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001) and *I Don't Sound Like Nobody: Remaking Music in 1950s America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011). But the issue of a jazz recording as a finished artifact, a “work,” is further problematized by Miles Davis’s well-known view that “when they make records with all the mistakes in, as well as the rest, then they’ll really make jazz records.” See Ralph J. Gleason, *Celebrating the Duke and Louis, Bessie, Billie, Bird, Carmen, Miles, Dizzy, and Other Heroes* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1975; repr., New York: Da Capo, 1995), 134.

9. Miles Davis with Quincy Troupe, *Miles: The Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 234.

10. Davis, *Autobiography*, 192, 195, 196, 198.

11. Evans has drawn particular attention in this scale to some of its characteristics. The additional slurs below the notes point out the major thirds (B–D-sharp, C–E) on the first and second notes of the scale and the minor thirds on the third and fourth notes of the scale (C–E, D-sharp–F-sharp). The “exoticism” in the “sound” is, of course, created mostly by the half step from the first degree to the second and the augmented-second interval from the second degree to the third.

12. It is sad to see the number of pill bottles on Adderley’s music stand (not to mention the cigarettes), for Adderley was a diabetic, as was his brother, the cornetist and trumpeter Nat Adderley. See Ian Carr, *Miles Davis: The Definitive Biography*, rev. ed. (New York: Thunder’s Mouth, 1998), 327; “Adderley, Nat (haniel, Sr.),” Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>. Julian “Cannonball” Adderley died at the age of forty-six. His condition at least kept him off drugs, unlike some of the others, which earned him the position of the group’s manager, “paying off the guys, collecting money [from the clubs].” “In a way, I suppose, I was a kind of stabilizing influence on the band.” Jack Chambers, *Milestones: The Music and Times of Miles Davis*, 2 vols. (New York: Da Capo, 1998), 1:307 and 1:283.

13. Kahn repeats most of these errors in his essay included in the book for the “deluxe” edition of *Kind of Blue* (Columbia Legacy 88697 33552 2), published in 2008. The essay also compounds the issue of the incorrect titles by reproducing (in color) the documents that list them correctly and then ignoring them in the text.

14. This idea has been around for a while. It was raised again in conversation some years ago by Zbigniew Granat, who generously suggested that I research the details of the conundrum.

15. This and subsequent documents are reproduced in Kahn’s book.

16. Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 150.

17. Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 150. In 1956, Columbia Records producer George Avakian hired Macero as a tape editor. Following Avakian’s departure from the label in 1958, and the transfer of producer Irving Townsend to the West Coast in 1959, Macero became the label’s main producer of jazz and commercial music. He worked there from 1959 to 1975.

18. In “Self-Portrait,” a Columbia publication compiled from an interview with his producer at the time, George Avakian, Davis said: “I don’t keep any of my records. I

can't stand to hear them after I've made them." See "Self-Portrait," published by Columbia Records Biographical Service, 26 November 1957; repr. in *A Miles Davis Reader*, ed. Bill Kirchner (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 5–7.

19. Davis, *Autobiography*, 234.

20. Carr, *Miles Davis*, 151; Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 98 and 191. See also Conrad Silvert, liner notes to Bill Evans Trio, *Spring Leaves*, Milestone, M-47034 (1976); and Peter Pettinger, *Bill Evans: How My Heart Sings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 82.

21. The disagreement did not prevent Evans from performing and recording a piece that was ineluctably associated with Davis: "Milestones," which appears on Evans's *Waltz for Debby*, Riverside, (9)399 (1961), the second of the albums recorded live at the Village Vanguard on 25 June 1961.

22. Steve Berkowitz of Sony Legacy, quoted in Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 196.

23. Both of these may be seen in Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 168.

24. See, for example, Jimmy Heath and David Amram in Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 142 and 144.

25. Interview with Ralph Gleason, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 7 June 1959, quoted in Carr, *Miles Davis*, 149.

26. Interview on WKCR, 1979, quoted in Szwed, *So What*, 174.

27. The original manuscript of Bill Evans's liner notes for *Kind of Blue* is housed in the New York Public Library's Music Division. Teo Macero Collection, 1949–92, 1958–75 (bulk), JPB 00-8, Series 1: Columbia/CBS Records and M. Productions artist project files, 1958–82 and undated, Box 14, Folder 16.

28. In addition, the "F. S" and possibly the beginning of the lowercase "k," for "F. Sketches" were started in pencil, as were the "F. F" for "F. Freeloader," a circumstance I cannot explain.

29. The notes are reprinted in *Setting the Tempo: Fifty Years of Great Jazz Liner Notes*, ed. Tom Piazza (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 345–47. Piazza says that they "may be the most widely read liner notes in jazz history" (345).

30. You can see an equivalent small piece of music paper on Miles Davis's music stand in the photograph on the back of the LP jacket. "Sightation" music manuscript paper comes in both 10-stave and 12-stave formats. Adderley (the only musician playing an E-flat instrument) has the bottom piece of the page. Presumably, Evans went in the order: C, B-flat, and E-flat.

31. In the event, the performers played varying lengths of solos in the sound of these modes. The lengths of the solos for the five modes are as follows: Davis: Mode 1, 4 measures; Mode 2, 4 measures; Mode 3, 4 measures; Mode 4, 8 measures; Mode 5, 4 measures; Coltrane: 4, 4, 4, 8, 4; Adderley: 8, 4, 8, 8, 4; Evans: 8, 4, 8, 4, 4; Davis (second solo): 4, 4, 4, 8, 2. So we can see Davis starting off tentatively with regard to the flexibility of the lengths of the modal areas, Coltrane following Davis exactly, Adderley and Evans being the most flexible, as if by now they were comfortable with the "sounds" and the concept, and Davis playing his second solo with the same pattern as his first, with the exception of the shortened close on Mode 5.

32. Interview on WKCR, 1979, quoted in Szwed, *So What*, 174.
33. Sometimes, the musicians play F-sharp; sometimes, they play F-natural.
34. Several publications have the wrong scale listed for the second scale played on this piece. Ekkehard Jost, *Free Jazz* (Graz: Universal, 1974; repr., New York: Da Capo, 1994) calls the second scale A-flat Ionian (22). Mark Gridley, *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*, 19th ed. (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2009), has E-flat Dorian (495).
35. Mark Evan Bonds, "Mozart and the Image of Musical Genius," paper delivered at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 28 February 1991.
36. Gridley, *Jazz Styles*, 238.
37. Chambers, *Milestones*, 1:308.
38. Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 134.
39. Nisenson, *Miles Davis and His Masterpiece*, 156.
40. Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 134.
41. "Flamenco [cante Flamenco]," Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.
42. Piazza, *Setting the Tempo*, 345.
43. Its position at the end of the descriptions and the slightly larger gap in the manuscript between it and the notes for the preceding tune may be a result of its being a non-Evans composition and the only track on the album on which Evans did not play.
44. "Freddie Freeloader" was recorded first because it was the only track that featured Wynton Kelly, the new pianist who had joined the band in February. For all the other tracks the pianist was Evans, who had left the band in November 1958 but had discussed the concepts for the music on *Kind of Blue* with Davis and therefore rejoined just for the recording sessions. They also recorded "Freddie Freeloader" first because Kelly was apparently upset to see Evans turn up for the recording. See Nisenson, *Miles Davis and His Masterpiece*, 141, 149; Carr, *Miles Davis*, 146; and Szwed, *So What*, 173.
45. Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 154. This is particularly odd since some parts of the manuscript, including those showing both album and track titles, are reproduced on the endpapers of his book.