

# THE CHARLIE BYRD TRIO



au courant



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Charlie Byrd's intimate relationship with the guitar has led him on a colorful journey that began at the age of nine during the Great Depression, a time when he soaked up the sounds and techniques of blues players who walked through the door of his father's country store in Virginia. From there he went on to play with Django Reinhardt in World War II Paris, study classical guitar with Andrés Segovia in the early '50s, and help make bossa nova a permanent part of jazz a decade later...

In describing his approach to the guitar as "constantly evolving," Charlie validates the album's title, which means "what's happening" or "up to date." While *AU COURANT* certainly reflects the current state of one of the instrument's most distinguished figures, it also exhibits a quality shared by all great music — it's timeless!

JIM FERGUSON {Liner notes inside}

- 1 THIS CAN'T BE LOVE 3:01
- 2 MY ROMANCE 3:31
- 3 ST. LOUIS BLUES 5:36
- 4 ON A CLEAR DAY (YOU CAN SEE FOREVER) 4:30
- 5 THERE'LL BE SOME CHANGES MADE 3:24
- 6 IF YOU NEVER CAME TO ME 5:04
- 7 I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TIME IT WAS 4:02
- 8 AVALON 3:03
- 9 EMILY  
(THEME FROM *The Americanization of Emily*) 3:09
- 10 THERE'S A SMALL HOTEL 4:22
- 11 BLUE ROOM 4:06
- 12 HAVE YOU MET MISS JONES? 4:16
- 13 WILLOW WEEP FOR ME 5:09
- 14 DAYS OF WINE AND ROSES 4:10

**CHARLIE BYRD** acoustic guitar  
**CHUCK REDD** vibraphone  
**JOE BYRD** acoustic bass

Produced by Allen Farnham  
Executive Producer: John Burk  
Engineered by Eric Lemley  
Mixed by Phil Edwards



CCD-4779-2



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# THE CHARLIE BYRD TRIO

*a u c o u r a n t*

1 **THIS CAN'T BE LOVE** 3:01

(Richard Rodgers/Lorenz Hart) Chappell & Co. Inc./Williamson Music Co. ASCAP

2 **MY ROMANCE** 3:31

(Richard Rodgers/Lorenz Hart) Lorenz Hart Publ. Co./Williamson Music Co. ASCAP

3 **ST. LOUIS BLUES** 5:36

(W.C. Handy) (Public Domain)

4 **ON A CLEAR DAY (YOU CAN SEE FOREVER)** 4:30

(Alan Jay Lerner/Burton Lane) Chappell & Co. Inc. ASCAP

5 **THERE'LL BE SOME CHANGES MADE** 3:24

(Billy Higgins/B. Overstreet) Edward B. Marks Music Co. BMI

6 **IF YOU NEVER CAME TO ME** 5:04

(Gilbert Ray/Antonio Carlos Jobim/Aloysio deOliveira) Ipanema Music Corp. ASCAP

7 **I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TIME IT WAS** 4:02

(Richard Rodgers/Lorenz Hart) Lorenz Hart Publ. Co./Williamson Music Co. ASCAP

8 **AVALON** 3:03

(Arthur Johnston/George W. Meyer/Lee Morris) Edwin H. Morris & Co. Inc. ASCAP

9 **EMILY** (Theme from *The Americanization of Emily*) 3:09

(Johnny Mercer/Johnny Mandell) EMI-Miller Catalog Inc. ASCAP

10 **THERE'S A SMALL HOTEL** 4:22

(Richard Rodgers/Lorenz Hart) Williamson Music Co./Chappell & Co. Inc. ASCAP

11 **BLUE ROOM** 4:06

(Richard Rodgers/Lorenz Hart) Williamson Music Co./Harms Inc. ASCAP

12 **HAVE YOU MET MISS JONES?** 4:16

(Richard Rodgers/Lorenz Hart) Chappell & Co. Inc./Williamson Music Co. ASCAP

13 **WILLOW WEEP FOR ME** 5:09

(Ann Ronell) The Songwriters Guild ASCAP

14 **DAYS OF WINE AND ROSES** 4:10

(Henry Mancini) M. Witmark & Sons ASCAP

Charlie Byrd's intimate relationship with the guitar has led him on a colorful journey that began at the age of nine during the Great Depression, a time when he soaked up the sounds and techniques of blues players who walked through the door of his father's country store in Virginia. From there he went on to play with Django Reinhardt in World War II Paris, study classical guitar with Andrés Segovia in the early '50s, and help make bossa nova a permanent part of jazz a decade later. Today, he's practically active as ever, recording and performing with both the Washington Guitar Quartet and the latest edition of the Great Guitars, which includes Herb Ellis and Mundell Lowe.

But of all his recent activities, probably none so completely tests his musical abilities as does the Charlie Byrd Trio, which features his brother, Joe, on acoustic bass and long-time associate Chuck Redd, who made his recording debut as a vibraphonist on Charlie's 1994 Concord album *Moments Like This*. "I do most of the arranging, with Chuck's help," he states. "The idea is to interact with each other, and we never do things the same way twice. Chuck knows my every phrase inside and out because he played drums with me for so long. I had never met a drummer who was so aware of what I was doing. When he picked up the vibes, a melodic instrument, it was an eerie experience. At first I didn't think the vibes would work well with what I do, but I was wrong. Its sustain and range make the group sound larger than it is, and the volume level is so well balanced that we can play acoustically. I knew I had to record this album with us playing this way."

Employing classical right-hand technique to produce his trademark marriage of sophisticated chords and melodic, frequently blues-tinged single-note lines, Byrd has a multi-dimensional instrumental style that is unique in a world traditionally

dominated by electric guitarists who use a pick. "I started playing jazz with my fingers in the late '40s," he explains in his typically understated fashion. "When I finally came up with the idea, I realized that it was mine, something that nobody had fooled with. It was a good move on my part." The versatility of his technique—combined with his brother's acute skills and Redd's own ability to seamlessly switch between chordal and melodic duties—help achieve the uncommon degree of interplay that takes place throughout the material here.

The first case in point is **This Can't Be Love**, one of five numbers by Rodgers and Hart. ("Their tunes are my idea of something good to blow on," says Charlie.) Its grooving swing and the participants' kinetic interaction toward the end effectively contrast with the more subdued mood of **My Romance**, which includes articulate bow work by Joe Byrd and finds the players entering one at a time.

When Charlie was nine, he learned **St. Louis Blues** from a guy in a traveling tent show (notice the tango feel, an original feature that others often omit), while he gives **On A Clear Day**, a tune he's never recorded before, a vibrant bossa nova treatment. Another song he picked up in his "single-digit days" is **There'll Be Some Changes Made**, graced by a propulsive, funky rhythm and a tasteful, bluesy guitar solo. ("Blues is the mother's milk of jazz, isn't it?" he asks.) Despite Byrd's close connection to the music of Jobim, he learned **If You Never Came To Me** only recently, something that suggests that even the most experienced player is in a constant state of discovery.

A Charlie Parker recording provided Byrd's first encounter with **I Didn't Know What Time It Was**, a "tricky rascal" that features some beautiful counterlines by Redd during the out-head. "I have to come down a peg or two in terms of tempo to get to my single-



note thing," Charlie says in reference to his rousing, rhythmic solo on **Avalon**. "Playing rhythmically is a refreshing way of treating a fast tempo when everyone else is focusing on lines." Byrd and company bring things back down with **Emily**, which takes full advantage of the nylon-string guitar's lyrical capabilities.

"Doing **Small Hotel** as a bossa nova makes no sense other than that it sounds good," Charlie says. "Now I can't hear it any other way. The changing interval featured in the melody to **Blue Room** is more a motif than a theme, while the bridge to **Have You Met Miss Jones?** is unique to all the world, something that people have made a career of playing. Both aspects are good examples of why I like Richard Rodgers so much."

Charlie selected **Willow Weep For Me** because he has performed it with Ellis and Lowe in the Great Guitars for the last few years, while he uses classical guitar pizzicato for the beginning of his solo on **Days of Wine and Roses**. Both tunes, by the way, feature the refined interaction between Byrd and Redd that typifies the set's high level of musicianship.

In describing his approach to the guitar as "constantly evolving," Charlie validates the album's title, which means "what's happening" or "up to date." While *AU COURANT* certainly reflects the current state of one of the instrument's most distinguished figures, it also exhibits a quality shared by all great music — it's timeless.

#### JIM FERGUSON

*Jim Ferguson is a Grammy-nominated writer whose work appears in numerous international publications. He divides his time between college music instruction, freelance writing, and jazz and classical guitar performance.*

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- BRAZILVILLE** (with Bud Shank, Joe Byrd & Chuck Redd) CCD-4173
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**CHUCK REDD** vibraphone

**JOE BYRD** acoustic bass

Produced by Allen Farnham

Assistant Producer: Robert Redd

Executive Producer: John Burk

Recorded at Omega Studios, Rockville, MD

April 8-9, 1997

Engineered by Eric Lemley, assisted by Chad Gorsky

Mixed & assembled by Phil Edwards at PER, Hayward, CA

Mastered by George Horn

Production Manager: Kathleen Vance

Art Direction: Kent Judkins

Cover Photography: David Fischer

Artist Management: BENNETT MORGAN & ASSOCIATES/Rose Neckles, 1282 Rte. 376,  
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featuring **CHUCK REDD & JOE BYRD**

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disc



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