

FIVE WEEKS FOR MILES - Week 3, 2026

"Plugged Nickel" - The Shorter Years

SET 1

- **Agitation** (bass solo last - morphing into "Footprints")
- **Footprints** (ala 1968 Sweden Live... vamp fade at end into Brown on "Funny Valentine" theme)
- **My Funny Valentine** (free-ish, until blowing... and end bass starts "So What")
- **So What** (so fast we can barely play it... improvise ending)
- **I Fall In Love Too Easily** (vamp and fade... Brown will state "Oleo" theme off the tail end of tune)
- **Oleo** (fast as fuck... it's 340bpm on the recording!... morph in to 7 Steps)
- **Seven Steps To Heaven** (on the edge of falling apart)
- to end/walk-off: **The Theme**

SET 2

- **If I were a Bell** (piano intro, fast temp... blow on changes, I-VI-II-V on cue at end)
- **Stella** (Brown melody right off of tail of "Bell"...))
- **All Of You** (medium... mess with statement of theme... blow on changes... then I-VI-II-V on cue)
- **Round Midnight** (free-ish statement of melody, time for blowing...)
- **All Blues** (tenor plays line to start...)
- **Green Dolphin St.** (fast.. move between latin and swing)
- **Four** (drums to start, play melody weirdly, and we're off!)
- to end/walk-off: **The Theme**

- 1) Rhythm section (particularly Tony) is very interactive with the soloists
- 2) Hot Tempos should be *really* hot...
- 3) Freeness/avant-garde chops throughout -- create spaces and then inhabit them whenever possible... don't just "blow over the form"... paint!
- 4) 2 horns never double a theme... so let Brown state all initial themes (ie - first A), Andy playing guidetone-ish Wayne-ish counter-lines
- 5) When the soloist restates tempos on occasion, rhythm section chases them into the new time...
- 6) As you can see from the Set List -- tunes will often flow right into the next one... so think about creating atmospheres, spaces and pockets to inhabit... Be it burning, or haunting... let the tunes breathe like Miles band did in '65...those guys played like a singular organic being -- so stay hyper aware of what's going on around you -- with the soloist leading the dance.
- 7) The soloist of the moment LEADS the group... if he wants to redefine the time, or change feels -- go with him -- say YES to everything and keep your eyes and antennae UP.
- 8) As Wayne described in his book "Footprints", it was Tony's scheme for them to play everything in an unexpected fashion... to surprise themselves and reach for new directions at the same time... so let's all do the same... lots of stretching... non-traditional approaches to these age-old standards... if we can effectively do that, that's the best Tribute to this period of Miles' life I can think of. :)

9) Have a great gig guys and thanks for being part of this!

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Two quintets in particular featuring 2 tenor saxophone giants dominated Miles' musical life almost exclusively from the mid 50's, right up until the 70's, one featuring John Coltrane and the other featuring Wayne Shorter. This period would feature an assortment of quintets and sextets all pushing the boundaries of improvisation within a simple modal framework, but the two teamings that would leave the world breathless would be those of Coltrane and Shorter. Of those two teamings it would be the Miles-Shorter pairing that would result in some of the most explosively creative & exploratory jazz in Miles' history. "Live at the Plugged Nickel" (Columbia / Legacy '65) continues to be a paramount recording in the great Miles lineage and considered by many to be some of the most ground-breaking jazz in history.

Perversely, Columbia (Sony) has never issued the eight disks separately. There is a one-cd compilation, Highlights from the Plugged Nickel, which only suggests the majesty of the whole. The Box retails for about \$116.97 U.S., a prohibitive price for most listeners... which means most listeners have not heard Wayne Shorter at his recorded best. His outstanding 1960s albums on Blue Note and his studio work with Miles contain much wonderful playing, but on the Plugged Nickel box, Wayne's characteristic reserve sits out, with jaw-dropping results.

Full title: The Complete Live At The Plugged Nickel 1965. Personnel: Miles Davis (trumpet); Wayne Shorter (tenor saxophone); Herbie Hancock (piano); Ron Carter (bass); Tony Williams (drums). Recorded live at the Plugged Nickel, Chicago, Illinois in December 1965. THE COMPLETE LIVE AT THE PLUGGED NICKEL represents the great divide in the music of Miles Davis. When his rhythm section drifted off in 1963 to form the Wynton Kelly Trio, Miles tried several different combinations before settling on a rhythm section composed of bassist Ron Carter, pianist Herbie Hancock and drummer Tony Williams. With the stalwart Memphis tenor man George Coleman, they expanded on the trumpeter's traditional repertoire. But creative tensions within the band kept things in a state of flux. The influence of drummer Tony Williams gave the music a pronounced edge and a new rhythmic focus. The drummer was not partial to Coleman's more conservative bebop stylings, and when Coleman finally left the group, Williams talked Miles into hiring his old Boston employer Sam Rivers (MILES IN TOKYO). As it turns out, Coltrane himself had recommended Wayne Shorter as his replacement four years earlier. Shorter finally left Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers in 1964, and the dynamic of Miles' band changed profoundly when he came aboard. This deluxe CD set reprises material originally released on LIVE AT... and COOKIN' AT THE PLUGGED NICKEL, restoring all the edits and missing solos. More significantly, THE COMPLETE LIVE AT THE PLUGGED NICKEL contains every note of music played on December 22-23, 1965--seven complete sets over two evenings. Stunning, revelatory music that in some ways exceeds the radical vigor of contemporaneous studio material on E.S.P. and MILES SMILES. The band's collective approach to rhythm and harmony transforms these songs into free-form expositions. Listening to this band blossom, you can hear why the great director waited on Shorter to become his new tenor star--and how they would influence each other. There are so many extraordinary moments, it seems almost arbitrary to single out highlights. There's the giddy freedom of Shorter's line on "The Theme" from the very first set (and the way the rhythm section continually reshuffles the deck); the "aw-shucks" aplomb with which the band navigates the white water rapids of "Oleo" during the last set; and the classic elegance with which Miles begins the second set, second night--only to dissolve into the futuristic strains of "Agitation." Needless to say, the quintet's joy of discovery is surpassed only by the glint of jubilation and insight listeners will observe in each other as these historical performances become old friends.