



## Dexter Gordon - More Than You Know - Introduction

It was in the spring of 2023 that I first imagined a new series in our catalog—one that would pay tribute to the Giants of Jazz.

I had already turned my gaze to the past with the reissue of the *Modern Art Trio*, but this time the aim was different.

What I wanted, very clearly, was to unearth previously **unreleased tapes**—live recordings that captured these artists in a particularly inspired moment. This was a project halfway between **historical preservation**, which had already begun with our reissues, and the kind of **aesthetic and production responsibility** that typically comes with releasing new material.

And in this case—dealing with artists whose greatness is both widely recognized and historically affirmed—a certain depth of historical awareness becomes essential. It allows us to recognize, in a given session, the spark, the sense of risk, the shared breath that emerges through musical choices as they unfold on stage—elements that make a performance truly worth documenting.

It all began with a **selection process**: listening through the tapes we already had, while actively seeking out additional live recordings. In some cases—driven by my personal passion for certain musicians—I reached out to audiophiles and long-time concertgoers, asking which performances had left the strongest impression on them. And whether, by any chance, they had managed to capture those shows on reel-to-reel, DAT, or cassette tape, using portable devices or, in rare cases, recordings taken directly from the mixing board. As is often the case with this kind of work, word spread—and soon, tapes began to arrive in large numbers.

What followed was a long evaluation phase. Not all concerts stood out musically: some had strong moments, others hid real gems within technically compromised recordings, or were simply too degraded by time and wear.

This first release in the series features one of the true titans of jazz history—*The Sophisticated Giant*, the great tenor saxophone master **Dexter Gordon**, performing

live with his early-'80s quartet: **Kirk Lightsey** on piano, **David Eubanks** on bass, and **Edward Gladden** on drums. The concert was recorded in **Genoa, Italy, in 1981**, at **Villa Imperiale**.

I already had several tapes of Dexter Gordon's performances in Italy, but this one—despite the audio peculiarities we had to work on—had all the qualities I was looking for: that magic, that sense of unity where each band member seems to feed off the others' energy.

Just **three standards and two originals** by Dexter himself—all delivered with depth and insight—explored in their full potential, transformed and ignited by a powerful, driving swing. The arrangements are essential but distinctive. The sound, commanding and expressive.

An ideal session to begin a new chapter in the **GleAM Records** journey, and to carry a fresh, hidden fragment of Dexter Gordon's legacy to every corner of the world.

Angelo Mastronardi

## Dexter Gordon - More Than You Know - The restoration of a piece of history

Some projects start out as a bit of a gamble, forgotten finds which only later reveal their true importance. "More Than You Know\*", by Dexter Gordon is a case in point; a work requiring dedication, sensitivity and a strong desire to restore dignity to a recording made more than forty years ago. An evening in 1981, captured on cassette, it's eighth of an inch tape faded with the passing of time, and a tenor sax which can live again to express its full beauty once more.

It all started with an analogue tape. An apparently unremarkable cassette, bearing only a name and a date. Inside, however, it contained a live recording by jazz giant Dexter Gordon, a concert which has never previously been released. A rough, imperfect sound featuring tape flutter and hiss, alterations in recording level, but at the same time, incredibly alive.

The first step involved careful listening. This proved to be both a moving and technical experience. Moving, because each and every note seemed to whisper to me that something precious was hidden on that tape. Technical, because it was immediately evident that the recording was in a compromised condition: there were imbalances between channels, veiled alternating audio drops between L+R streams, and magnetic smears. It was like attempting to read a manuscript ruined by water; you can sense the beauty held within, but it all has to be reconstructed.

Restoration began with high-definition digitization, in order to preserve each fragment of the original signal. The transfer was made with a specially calibrated Teac V5000 cassette deck. The first digital listen confirmed all the critical issues; slight phase fluctuations, sudden fluctuations in the recording of the sax and consequent instability of the dynamic curve in the performance.

The biggest challenge was indeed just this: to not 'reconstruct artificially' but to 'repair with respect'. Like a restorer working on an old painting, my aim was not to embellish, but to bring back to life that which once was. I adopted a surgical approach, including micro-interventions to correct phase alterations, the repair of slight drops with numerous minimal interpolations, the targeted removal of analogue tape hiss and the dynamic management of equalization channel by channel, working on each segment in turn.

A delicate part of the process concerned the 'reconstruction and adaptation of the equalization curve' between the right and left channels, in order to make it consistent and acceptable from one track to the next, often progressively altered by mechanical dragging, presumably already an issue during the recording phase of the live performance, possibly due to the state of the device used. Wherever possible, I recreated the original curves making use of residual harmonics, restoring continuity to a performance which, as is only normal and natural in a live setting, had lost a certain something.

The end result is an "authentic live album". It may not be "perfect" according to modern parameters, but it is deeply, and beautifully "true". Each and every note of

Gordon's sax, each cymbal beat, each voice in the audience takes the listener back to that unrepeatable moment in 1981.

I have never considered this project as a simple record product, but rather, as a testimony, a document, an act of love for music and for those who preserve it.

After all, saving this recording means "conserving a piece of collective memory", and for me, carrying out this task with the greatest respect was the only possible way.

**Tommy Cavalieri - Sorriso Studios**

## **More Than You Know: Dexter Gordon in Genoa, Italy on July 7, 1981**

### **In the Spirit of Love, Life, and Music**

*June 12, 2025*

#### **Introduction**

Few relationships in Jazz history have been as profound and enduring as the one between Dexter Gordon and Italy's passionate Jazz community. The historic concert recorded at the Estate Jazz festival, Parco Villa Imperiale, Genoa, Italy on July 7, 1981 stands as testament to a musical love affair that transformed both artist and audience, capturing Dexter at the height of his mature powers alongside his esteemed quartet.

For decades, Italy served as more than just another concert date for Dexter—it became a second home where his artistry found some of its most devoted audiences. The music preserved here represents the culmination of that special relationship, offering future generations a window into why Dexter became one of the most beloved Jazz musicians ever to perform.



### A Musical Sanctuary: Italy's Embrace of Jazz Excellence

Italy's relationship with American Jazz runs much deeper than simple appreciation—it has been a genuine love affair spanning generations. The Italian musical community provided sanctuary for many innovative artists since Jazz's earliest periods. When Dexter first began touring Europe in the early 1960s, he discovered something remarkable in Italy: listeners who understood Jazz not as exotic entertainment but as serious artistic expression deserving the same respect given to opera or classical music.

Jazz devotees throughout Italy—from Rome's intimate clubs to Sicily's festival stages—brought intellectual intensity and emotional investment that transformed performances into genuine artistic events. Cities like Genoa, Pescara, Umbria, Bologna, and Florence became essential stops on any serious Jazz musician's European itinerary, not just for enthusiastic crowds but for the quality of attention those crowds provided.

This tradition of welcoming America's Jazz masters created a legacy spanning generations. Art Blakey found audiences who truly grasped the spiritual message behind his Jazz Messengers presentations. Cedar Walton discovered listeners who appreciated sophisticated harmonic concepts underlying his compositions. Dizzy Gillespie encountered devotees who embraced both his bebop innovations and Afro-Cuban explorations. Elvin Jones found audiences who could follow his most complex polyrhythmic journeys, while Woody Shaw encountered serious attention his advanced harmonic innovations deserved.

Promoters who made this possible, particularly Alberto Alberti, understood that great Jazz required more than just booking artists—it demanded creating environments where musicians could take real artistic risks. Alberti's dedication to presenting Jazz at its highest level made him beloved throughout the international Jazz community and helped establish Italy as a crucial destination for America's finest musicians.



### Dexter's European Transformation

Dexter's 1962 departure for Europe marked a turning point that would define the rest of his career. What began as a two-week engagement at Ronnie Scott's club in London—sparked by a chance bar conversation in New York—stretched into fourteen transformative years. When Harold Goldberg invited him to Copenhagen's Jazthus Montmartre, Dexter found his European home base, but it was his regular returns to Italy that truly fed his artistic soul.

The European experience fundamentally changed how Dexter approached his music. Gone were commercial pressures and limited performance opportunities that had constrained his American career. In their place came something precious: the freedom to stretch out musically, develop ideas fully, and trust that audiences would follow wherever his musical imagination led.

Copenhagen provided stability and steady work, but Italy offered something equally valuable—passion. The Jazz community there didn't just listen; they studied, discussed, and brought the same analytical rigor to Dexter's performances that they applied to La Scala productions. For a musician who had always been cerebral about his art, this level of engagement proved both inspiring and liberating.

### Dexter's Homecoming

The story of Dexter's return to America intertwines beautifully with Italy's continued support for Jazz excellence. In 1976, when Dexter was performing with George Gruntz's big band, trumpeter Woody Shaw was also on the bill. Backstage, after hearing Woody warm up, Dexter made a comment that would change both their lives: he told Woody that he reminded him of legendary bebop trumpeter Fats Navarro. This wasn't casual praise—it was recognition that would soon transform both their careers.

After their meeting in Gruntz's band, Woody began pushing for Dexter's return to America, convinced that audiences there were ready to embrace the kind of acou-

stic Jazz that Dexter had been perfecting during his European years. When the moment finally came in 1976, Woody made an extraordinary gesture: he gave Dexter his own working band, which he had been co-leading with drummer Louis Hayes. The "Homecoming" album, recorded at the Village Vanguard in 1976, featured Woody Shaw on trumpet, Louis Hayes on drums, Stafford James on bass, and Ronnie Matthews on piano. This began Dexter's relationship with producer Michael Cuscuna and partnership with Maxine Gordon. Together they documented not just Dexter's return but the beginning of what would become a historically significant revival for straight-ahead Jazz.

#### **A Precursor to Jazz's Resurgence**

The passion for Jazz that characterized audiences throughout Italy found perfect expression in venues like Rome's legendary Music Inn, which became a crucial meeting ground between American masters and the emerging generation of European Jazz musicians. The club was opened in 1973 by Pepito Pignatelli in a basement in Largo dei Fiorentini, behind Via Giulia.

Numerous Jazz musicians performed in the Roman venue over the years—Ornette Coleman, McCoy Tyner, Bill Evans, Dexter Gordon, Woody Shaw, Jackie McLean, Max Roach, Chet Baker, Carmen McRae, Charles Mingus, to name but a few. In most cases, foreign musicians were accompanied by young local instrumentalists, including Enrico Pieranunzi, Roberto Gatto, Giovanni Tommaso, Maurizio Giamarco, Enzo Pietropaoli, Danilo Rea, Massimo Urbani, and Fabrizio Sferra.

It was in this environment of serious musical dedication and cross-cultural collaboration that the groundwork was laid for profound musical relationships that would shape Jazz's international development, including the pivotal connection between Dexter Gordon and Woody Shaw that would ultimately transform both their careers.



### **The Quartet: Musical Chemistry and Personal Bonds**

The musicians who joined Dexter for this recording brought not just technical excellence but deep personal and musical connections that enriched their collaboration. These were carefully chosen partners who understood both the music and each other in ways that transformed individual performances into collective statements. Kirk Lightsey's path to Dexter's group reads like Jazz destiny. Their first encounter happened in Stockholm during the early 1970s when Lightsey was touring with O.C. Smith. Dexter had dismissed his pianist that evening, and when Lightsey arrived at the club, he was immediately invited to perform. Years later, when George Cables announced his departure from Dexter's group, Lightsey was recruited for the position.

Lightsey brought substantial credentials to his role with Dexter. His extensive work with Chet Baker had established his reputation as a collaborative pianist, while his earlier experience with Sonny Stitt provided him with the harmonic sophistication Dexter's music required. Their five-year association from 1980 to 1985 produced numerous recordings and established one of the era's most successful pianist-saxophone partnerships.

David Eubanks came to Dexter's group with impressive musical lineage and the challenging task of replacing Rufus Reid, one of the most respected bassists in Jazz. Eubanks brought both technical skills and musical maturity necessary for this demanding role, plus the musical DNA of the renowned Eubanks family.

Eddie Gladden completed the rhythm section, bringing years of experience working with Dexter and brilliant virtuosic soloing throughout this album. Gladden's tenure with Dexter came about through Woody Shaw's recommendation—they had grown up together in Newark, New Jersey, and attended the same high school, forging a friendship that proved crucial to both their careers.

### **The Repertoire: Musical Choices and Personal Expression**

The four compositions featured in this recording represent different facets of Dexter's approach to the Jazz repertoire. "It's You Or No One" (Sammy Cahn/Jule Styne) had been part of Dexter's repertoire for many years, allowing him to demonstrate his interpretive skills with familiar material. "Hi-Fly" (Randy Weston) showed Dexter's appreciation for his contemporaries' work and willingness to explore material beyond traditional Jazz standards.

"More Than You Know" (Vincent Youmans/Billy Rose/Edward Eliscu) held special significance as both a beautiful composition and a statement of artistic philosophy. This classic American popular song had been recorded by numerous Jazz artists, but Dexter's interpretation brought a personal quality that seemed to reflect his own artistic journey. "Backstairs" (Dexter Gordon) concluded the performance with a demonstration of his skills as composer as well as interpreter, revealing his understanding of blues-based harmony and his ability to create material that challenged his sidemen while remaining accessible to audiences.

### **"Round Midnight" and International Recognition**

The broader significance of this recording becomes particularly evident with the eventual release of Bertrand Tavernier's "Round Midnight" in 1986. The film carried special meaning for European audiences who had witnessed firsthand the migration of American Jazz musicians to European venues during the 1960s. Jazz devotees in Italy could particularly appreciate the film's portrayal of the cultural exchange that had enriched both American Jazz and European musical life.

Tavernier's casting of Dexter in the leading role reflected the director's understanding that authenticity required someone who had actually lived the expatriate experience depicted in the film. Dexter's Academy Award nomination for Best Actor represented a remarkable achievement, but the David di Donatello Award for Best Foreign Actor that followed held special significance from a country whose audi-

ces had supported his work for decades.

As told by Maxine Gordon, widow, biographer, and former manager of Dexter Gordon:

*On July 18, 1987, Dexter played with "the Round Midnight band," featuring vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Pierre Michelot, and drummer Billy Higgins at the Umbria Jazz Festival in Perugia, Italy. This was Dexter's final performance in Italy. The audience was huge that evening, requiring Alberto Alberti to hire bodyguards because of all the people clamoring for autographs and photos with Dexter—because he was now a "movie star."*

### **Cultural Significance: A Lasting Musical Bond**

This recording captures more than just an exceptional performance—it documents the kind of serious artistic statement that becomes possible when musicians know their work will be heard and appreciated at its true level of sophistication. The relationship between Dexter and audiences throughout Italy transcended simple musical appreciation to become a cultural bridge between American artistic innovation and European intellectual tradition.

The success of musicians like Dexter in Italy helped establish the country as one of the world's most important centers for Jazz appreciation and performance. This tradition continues today, built on the foundation of mutual respect between artists and audiences that characterized performances like this one.

### **Conclusion: Preserving a Musical Legacy**

The "More Than You Know" recording stands as permanent testimony to the profound relationship between Dexter Gordon and the devoted Jazz community in Italy. It preserves a moment when Jazz had achieved true international status while maintaining its essential character as an art form based on individual expression within collective interaction.

Jazz musicians and fans in Italy remain among the most devout, loyal, and passionate in the entire world, and the estate of Dexter Gordon is proud to know that his legacy will continue to be celebrated there for years to come. This devotion represents something precious in contemporary culture: an audience that understands and appreciates Jazz not as nostalgia but as living art capable of continued relevance and meaning.

For listeners, this recording offers both historical documentation and continued inspiration. It shows how master musicians can approach familiar material and transform it through personal expression and group interaction into something entirely fresh, meaningful, and timeless. Most importantly, this recording reminds us that Jazz, at its finest, speaks to universal human experiences while maintaining its distinctive character as perhaps one of humanity's greatest cultural contributions to the world.

### **Epilogue: Continuing the Legacy**

Like Dexter's many historic performances and recordings in Europe, the 2018 publication of the award-winning biography "Sophisticated Giant," published in Italian, French, Spanish, and English, further documents this continuing cultural exchange, with the Italian edition serving as particularly meaningful testament to the enduring bond forged between American Jazz musicians and their most devoted international supporters. The legacy of Dexter Gordon and the devoted Jazz community in Italy is not just a chapter in music history, it is a living example of how culture transcends boundaries and unites humanity across time, culture, and geography, creating something truly memorable and universal that shall continue to inspire us for ages to come.

**Maxine Gordon, President  
Woody Louis Armstrong Shaw III, CEO  
The Dexter Gordon® Society, Inc.  
Estate of Dexter Gordon®**



**GleAM** Records®

New Trends in Italian and International Jazz



IRD International Record Distribution  
www.ird.it [ird@ird.it](mailto:ird@ird.it) tel. +39 0362 91 83 97

**galileo**  
MUSIC + COMMUNICATION

**MM**  
MARKET MUSIC  
IMPORTAZIONE + DISTRIBUZIONE