

## Foreword

Andy Hamilton and Lee Konitz have put together an extraordinary retrospective with interviews and commentary on the life of one of jazz music's most beloved and individual voices. Lee Konitz has contributed to the development of this music's life cycles from his emergence onto the scene in the 1940s to the explorations of today. Lee has always tried to be the most creative and spontaneous of improvisers, and has influenced all of us in the most positive way with his passionate and free-flowing approach to standard songs as well as more exploratory forms. In this collection of conversations, Lee gives insightful accounts and critiques of mentors and colleagues. He discusses his early family life growing up in Chicago, meeting, studying, and playing with Lennie Tristano, moving to New York, working with Miles Davis and contributing to the influential recording *Birth of the Cool* with Gil Evans, John Lewis, and Gerry Mulligan, joining Stan Kenton, as well as his associations with Lester Young, Charlie Parker, Warne Marsh, Charles Mingus, and other major musicians.

We come to discover why he plays the way he does, and what has driven him through the years in the world of music. Lee has led a full life as an innovative improviser in the international spotlight, and he is well-respected and revered around the world by musicians and fans. He has taught generations of musicians he's worked with through the years, just being himself and giving all he can with generosity and love. As an alto saxophonist he's developed his own sound and approach, different from Charlie Parker's. I am truly honored to know him and feel blessed to have him as a teacher, mentor, and friend. After my early listening to his records, I've had the great fortune to experience at first hand—or should I say first ear—his sound, feeling, and ideas on many occasions since the mid-1970s, when I moved to New York City. To be in a room with his sound is an inspiration, but to follow his lines on the tune he's exploring taught me so much about how to try and put it all together for myself. Your playing develops from everything you embrace, and Lee's clarity and subtleties, which come through on every phrase, gave me some beautiful things to reach for.

In 1991, Lee joined Charlie Haden, Bill Frisell, Paul Motian, and myself for a quintet session entitled *Paul Motian on Broadway, Volume III* (JMT

Records). This was the first time Lee and I actually played together, sharing melodies and improvising collectively throughout the recording. It is one of the most creative sessions of standard songs I've been a part of, and I am very proud of its success. Some years later, in the mid-1990s, the group did a three-week European festival tour with Marc Johnson on bass instead of Charlie. It was great to travel and play with Paul and Lee on this tour, given their long crazy history together that went back to the Lennie Tristano days in the 1950s—I think it was the first time they toured together. It was fun and challenging to play with these different personalities night after night, at such a high level of musicianship. The magic in jazz is all about communication and sharing ideas spontaneously within an ensemble—when it's happening, there's nothing like it in music! We had some incredible moments during that tour, and I learned a lot about who I am and what I'm trying to do in music and on my horn. Lee's love and dedication have driven his career, and given all of us who know him the confidence to create our own space in this amazing world of music we live in.

Enjoy meeting Lee Konitz in this book on a personal level, as honest and alive as his music.

Sounds and feelings,  
Joe Lovano