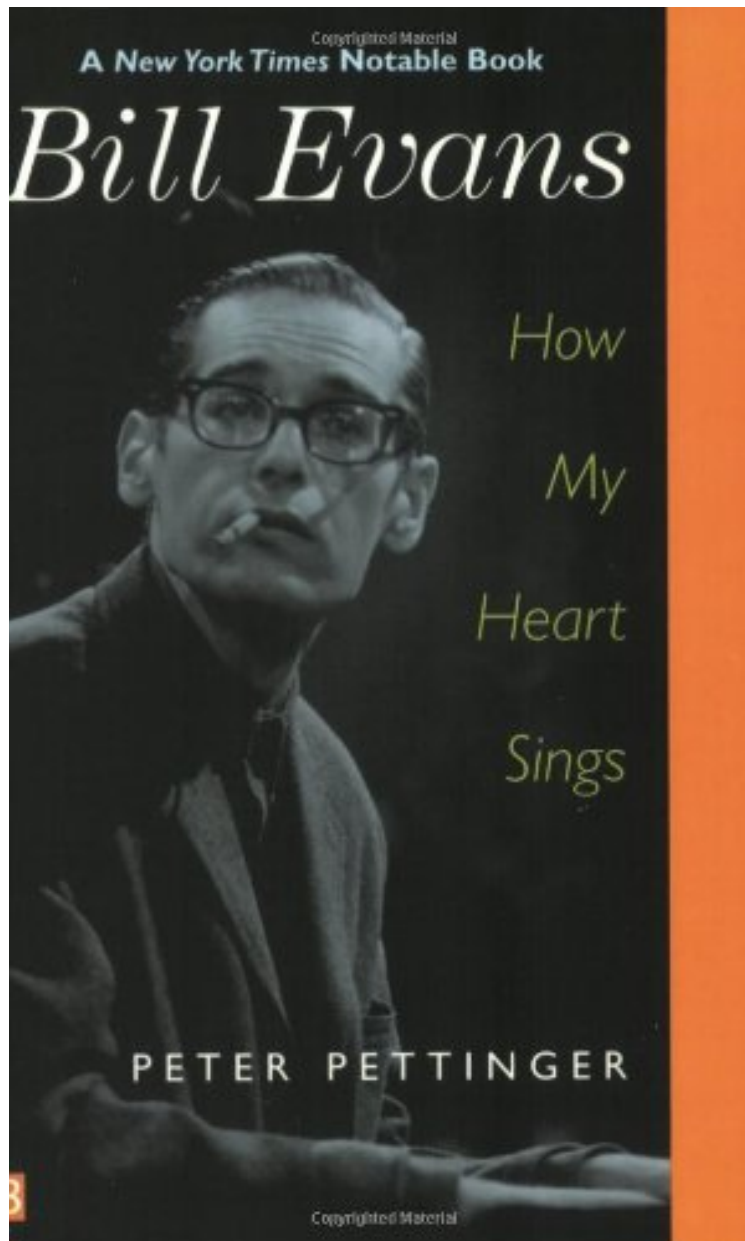


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## Bill Evans: How My Heart Sings

*Mr. Peter Pettinger, Peter Pettinger*  
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**Mr. Peter Pettinger, Peter Pettinger : Bill Evans: How My Heart Sings** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Bill Evans: How My Heart Sings:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. An excellent view from the inside outBy Edwin W. Skinner, Jr.I am

familiar with a great deal of Bill Evans' music and because of its very intimate personal nature, thought I knew Bill, too. Well, I only knew part of the story. Bill - like most of us - was a very complex being and his life was full of many ups and downs. Drugs, poverty, suicides . . . these were familiar themes to Bill who, despite the struggles and the sadness, managed to create some of the most sublimely beautiful music any human has ever laid to tape. This book captures and delivers Bill's life music in intimate detail, many of which are downright befuddling: Bill, on the surface the consummate urbanite, attended college in Louisiana (of all places), and actually enjoyed the slower pace of Southern life. While in school, Bill was the quarterback of the football team(!) and after his death, was returned to Louisiana for burial next to his beloved brother Harry. Crazy stuff for a music-loving kid from New Jersey . . . Bill's music and the people he encountered and worked with are detailed as well, including the relationship he shared with Miles Davis. Though they remained lifelong friends and influenced each other immensely, Bill apparently left the Kind of Blue-era sextet as a result of "reverse racism", whereby Bill took the heat for being the only white guy in the group. The book reveals that most of the "heat" came from Miles himself . . . I have a special interest in Bill Evans and his music and therefore found his life story an interesting read; if you share this interest, then this is the book for you. 10 of 11 people found the following review helpful. A must for fans, though lacking in some areas. By M. Mazza Pettinger should be commended for taking the high road by focusing on Evans' music and not the sordid details of his long years of addiction. However, there is more to biographical writing than merely presenting a sequence of events. Pettinger's research in the area of recordings, live performances, and collaborators is exhaustive, but I found the reading tedious (and I'm a fan of Evans) due to the repetitive construction of the chapters. On some occasions, his writing captures the music with uniquely employed details, and the reader sees that he is genuinely passionate about Evans' body of work. As a musician, I enjoyed these parts, and I respect Mr. Pettinger's insight. But there is an implicit focus on the importance of classical training in Evans' pianistic development, and I have to disagree with the emphasis placed on this. Evans' sound and nuanced playing are more a result of his dedication and vision as an artist. Classical training does not necessarily make a great pianist, and Pettinger stresses in various ways that Evans' knowledge of classical music infinitely aided him in revolutionizing jazz with his sound. Perhaps--but this is a bias of the author. Had he written about Thelonius Monk, he probably would have criticized his unorthodox technique, though clearly, someone like Evans had nothing but respect and admiration for Monk--precisely because Monk was unafraid to develop a unique approach that worked for him. Both pianists were obviously most noted for the unmistakable personalities of their sounds. The refinement of style through years of practicing, performing, and introspection is more important--and exciting--than the author's erudite allusions to classical pieces pertinent to Evans' compositions. Pettinger's writing is solid but incomplete for fans who want a dimensional presentation of this genius of the 20th century. Essentially, the writer lacks a risk-taking style and presents us with a thorough, well-documented companion piece to Evans' recordings. When Evans is quoted, this biography comes alive. I only wish he had written a book (he was noted for excellent commentary in liner notes), for I believe his writing was just as eloquent as his music. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I bought a number of albums while reading the book and it really made for a wonderful reading experience. By Paul Morel Outstanding book. I bought a number of albums while reading the book and it really made for a wonderful reading experience.

This enthralling book is the first biography in English of Bill Evans, one of the most influential of all jazz pianists. Peter Pettinger, himself a concert pianist, describes Evans' life (the personal tragedies and commercial successes), his musicmaking (technique, compositional methods, and approach to group playing), and his legacy. The book also includes a full discography and dozens of photographs.

Perhaps it was a white jazz musician's need to negate his very ordinary American boyhood, or maybe it was in the genes he inherited from his alcoholic father--no one can be quite sure--but Bill Evans, one of the most influential American jazz pianists ever, was a drug addict. He picked up his habit shortly after joining the Miles Davis Sextet in the 1950s, but it took Evans more than 20 years to be swallowed by the abyss of heroin, methadone, and cocaine. Sitting at the piano in the shadow of Davis, John Coltrane, Cannonball Adderley, Paul Chambers, and Philly Joe Jones--the era's paragons of cool--could not have been easy for the retiring musician who suffered harsh ribbing at the hands of both bandmates and fans. Ironically, as the drugs distorted Evans' body and soul, his fingers coaxed ever more sublime music from his keyboard. Biographer Peter Pettinger was himself a professional pianist and a longtime listener of Evans, so he is expert at articulating the nuances of the music. He is perceptive too in exploring the forces that imbued in one life so much beauty and so much pain. The result is a book that is both a memorial to a burdened man and an homage to his transcendent music. From Publishers Weekly If anyone deserves a good, accessible jazz biography, it's Bill Evans, the classically trained pianist who bridged the gap between bop and cool jazz and influenced a generation of ivory ticklers. Evans left an indelible stamp on the history of jazz piano, and as a white man in a world populated mostly by black musicians, he merits special consideration. Unfortunately, Pettinger's desiccated analytical biography doesn't do justice to Evan's tumultuous, often brilliant life. The main problem here is that the author, himself an internationally renowned British concert pianist, is more interested in the piano player than in the man.

After hitting some of the standard biographical notes (Evans was born in Plainfield, N.J., in 1929; talent for the piano appeared early), Pettinger dispenses with personal insights to such a degree that his book becomes more critical discography than biography. Intimates of Evans aren't described physically or characterized emotionally but are simply wrung dry of their musical content then pushed offstage. Interviews with contemporaries do provide memories of Evans, but they are often banal. In relating a life filled with romantic disappointment, extreme drug abuse and assorted illnesses that contributed to his early death in 1980, Pettinger paints only a pallid portrait of the man behind the music. Yet Pettinger is eminently qualified to assay Evan's evolution as a pianist, and students of Evans's music will no doubt enjoy the author's references to Evans's scores and academic excursions: e.g., "These four-note scale groups move down in thirds (a typical feature of the pianist's right-hand style) and they go five times into each half of the middle eight." In the end, though, fans of Evans's music may be left cold. 40 bw photos. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal

Pettinger, a concert pianist, offers a sympathetic biography of the seminal jazz pianist/composer Bill Evans (1929-80). Pettinger carefully explains the pianist's merging of classical structure with jazz improvisation for a distinctively understated, lyrical sound. Using secondary sources and material from a handful of interviews, Pettinger describes Evans's emergence as a fledging sideman in New York, his first album as a leader, and his contributions to modal jazz during stints with Miles Davis. Pettinger devotes the last half of the book to the quintessential Evans trio (with drummer Paul Motian and bassist Scott LaFaro), Evans's battles with heroin and cocaine, and his gigs and recording sessions with dozens of jazz luminaries until his premature death. Though seldom linking Evans with the larger social context in which jazz became popular during the 1950s and 1960s, Pettinger provides a portrait of Evans that will serve as a foundation for further investigation of this quiet jazz giant. Recommended for jazz fans and music buffs. A David P. Szatmary, Univ. of Washington, Seattle Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.