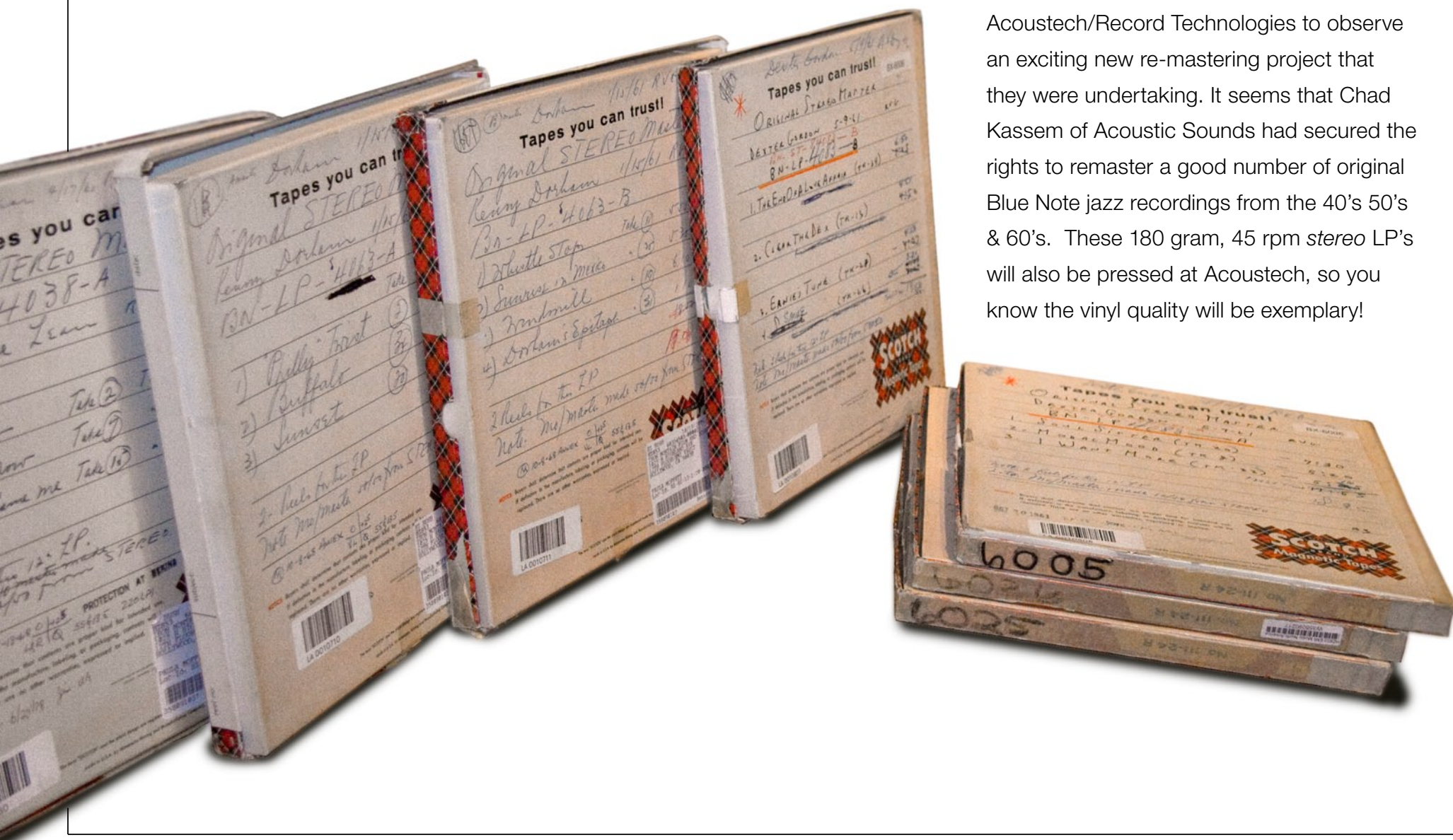


Blue Note Reissues, Gems and the Art of Jazz

By Dan Babineau

Every now and then life throws a real gem your way. That was the case when I was recently invited to visit the fine people at Acoustech/Record Technologies to observe an exciting new re-mastering project that they were undertaking. It seems that Chad Kassem of Acoustic Sounds had secured the rights to remaster a good number of original Blue Note jazz recordings from the 40's 50's & 60's. These 180 gram, 45 rpm stereo LP's will also be pressed at Acoustech, so you know the vinyl quality will be exemplary!



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by **Ben Fong-Torres**
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Many of you know me as a classical music fanatic, but if the truth be known, I was weaned on jazz. My father is still a huge collector of jazz recordings and many of his personal favorites just happened to be Blue Notes: Cannonball Adderley, Jackie McLean, Art Blakey, Horace Silver, Coltrane, Miles, Sonny Rollins, and of course Dexter Gordon. Yep, my dad had a thing for Dexter and I can easily recite every note that Mr. Gordon laid down for Blue Note. So imagine my delight as I stepped into the Acoustech mastering studio only to find the original master tape of "Dexter's Calling", pristine and ready to be remastered by two of the finest mastering engineers on the Earth!

Kevin Gray and Steve Hoffman were genuinely enthusiastic about the Blue Note project.

Steve explained that these truly were the original master tapes simply because Blue Note was a small company and didn't feel the need to make auxiliary back-up to these jazz masterpieces. I asked how many of the recordings were in mono and Steve went on to explain that they were all recorded in stereo and that they will be re-released in stereo as well!! He also explained that in the 40's 50's and 60's most people had mono hi-fi rigs and Blue Note released these LP's in mono to appeal to this first generation of audiophiles. And it was written right on the inside sleeve of each one of the six master tapes that I had the pleasure of founding with my own two hands: "stereo".

I get a real charge out of holding an original piece of art in my hands. It's a time warp imagining how it must have been during these legendary recording sessions.

(continued)

Listening to these tapes brings you even closer to a musical era that still speaks clearly to our hearts and souls.

When I walked into the room, Kevin and Steve were working on “Jackie’s Bag” by Jackie McLean. Smooth straight-ahead jazz, it makes you want to sink down in your chair and forget about the world. Along with another Jackie McLean recording, were master tapes for Kenny Dorham’s “Whistle Stop”, Fred Jackson’s boppy “Hootin’ N Tootin’ and of course, the Dexter Gordon tapes. Rudy Van Gelder’s initials graced the center of some of the master tape reels and each tape box contained the original recording notes for these solid works of art.

Kevin and Steve both agreed that the quality of the original recordings were quite good and felt that their role in this project was preserving these musical gems for generations to come, rather than making any radical changes. Once they went about their business of flicking switches and twisting the knobs of the control console, I noticed more clarity and weight to the Jackie McLean recording. Subtle changes to be sure, but the final result was more organic sounding. Definitely worth the wait on the LA freeway!

Remember, these recordings feature non-amplified instrumentation and when the tone is wrong you notice it immediately. But when it’s right it can’t be beat. Between the two of them, Kevin and Steve have over 50 years of record mastering experience. They make it look easy, but trust me nothing is further from the truth; they are performing an art that few engineers ever get close to. And the results of their efforts will be worth every penny as they begin releasing these Blue Notes in 2008. There will be about twenty five offerings in all and we are all in for an amazing treat as every one of these releases is clearly a monument to the art of jazz. Mr. Kassem definitely picked a set of winners here! I must get the Dexter Gordon recordings for my dad, I’ll also have to make sure his turntable is up to speed – 45rpm that is. ●

