**Links**

* [**The Big Takeover**](https://bigtakeover.com/recordings/KevinHaysBenStreetBillyHartAllThingsAreSmokeSessions) reviewed the album.
* [**Columbia Daily Tribune**](https://www.columbiatribune.com/story/entertainment/2021/07/04/notes-and-tones-new-lps-showcase-dynamic-approaches-group-playing/7782935002/) reviewed the album in their Notes and Tones column.
* [**DownBeat**](https://archive.maherpublications.com/view/542807548/46/) gave a great 4-star review in their July issue.
* [**Glide Magazine**](https://glidemagazine.com/257620/pianist-kevin-hays-bassist-ben-street-and-drummer-billy-hart-gang-up-on-all-things-are-album-review/) reviewed the album.
* [**Jazziz**](https://www.jazziz.com/10-albums-you-need-to-know-june-2021/) included the album in their “10 Albums You Need to Know: June 2021” column. Additionally, the album was reviewed in their [Summer print edition](https://www.jazziz.com/kevin-hays-ben-street-billy-hart-all-things-are-smoke-sessions/) and is available online now.
* [**JazzTimes**](https://jazztimes.com/reviews/albums/kevin-hays-ben-street-billy-hart-all-things-are-smoke-sessions/) reviewed the album in their September issue.
* [**Jazz Weekly**](https://www.jazzweekly.com/2021/06/kevin-hays-ben-street-billy-hart-all-things-are/) reviewed the album.
* [**Jazzwise**](https://www.jazzwise.com/review/kevin-hays-ben-street-billy-hart-all-things-are)reviewed the album.
* [**LA Jazz Scene**](http://lajazzscene.buzz/waxing-poetic-reviews/) reviewed the album.
* [**Musical Memoirs**](https://musicalmemoirs.wordpress.com/2021/06/22/music-of-power-endurance-jazz-keeps-hope-alive/) reviewed the album.
* [**NPR Music**](https://www.npr.org/2021/07/20/1017975258/nea-names-its-2022-jazz-masters-hart-clarke-wilson-and-harrison?ft=nprml&f=)mentioned the album in a story about Billy Hart becoming an NEA Jazz Master.
* [**The Times**](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/kevin-hays-ben-street-and-billy-hart-all-things-are-review-a-snapshot-of-spontaneity-and-solitude-9pm5pdthx) reviewed the album.
* [**WBGO “Take Five”**](https://www.wbgo.org/music/2021-06-01/take-five-a-wistful-appeal-from-nnenna-freelon-and-an-unearthed-gem-by-roy-hargrove-and-mulgrew-miller) included “Elegia” in their weekly column.

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# The Big Takeover

4 June 2021

by [Michael Toland](https://bigtakeover.com/author/Michael+Toland/)

Recorded live and crowdless at the Smoke Jazz Club in New York to celebrate veteran drummer **Billy Hart**’s eightieth birthday, *All Things Are* is an old-fashioned piano trio record made by old friends. Bassist **Ben Street** has been Hart’s rhythm partner in the latter’s eponymous quartet for fifteen years, and pianist **Kevin Hays** – whose .cv includes names like **Sonny Rollins**, **Joshua Redman**, **John Scofield,** **Chris Potter**and more – first shared musical space with Hart in the late eighties.

The trio takes on a program of three Hays originals and three “contrafacts” of well-known standards. The latter means rearrangements and extrapolations on “Scrapple From the Apple” (as “Unscrappulous”), “Stella By Starlight” (as “Twilight”) and “All the Things You Are” (the hard-swinging title track) – all reminiscent of the originals, but not close enough to truly be covers. (There’s long been precedent for this approach in jazz – after all, Charlie Parker’s “Moose the Mooche” and Duke Ellington’s “Cotton Tail” are both based on “I Got Rhythm,” and Miles Davis’ “So What” and John Coltrane’s “Impressions” use the chord structure of Morton Gould’s “Pavanne.”) Besides, considering this threesome’s incomparable improvisational chops, any tune becomes a new tune in their hands. Hays’ incredible piano chops and melodic sense and Hart and Street’s telepathic bond allows the musicians to turn on a dime, without ever letting the seams show.

The band’s performances shine just as bright on Hays’ wholly original tunes – check out the gorgeous “Elegia,” the brooding “Sweet Caroline” (not that one) and the thrilling opener “New Day.” The standard “For Heaven’s Sake,” which has long been a part of Hays’ repertoire, also gets a lovely reading. The record may have been intended to celebrate its legendary timekeeper’s birthday, but it sounds instead like the inauguration of jazz’s latest great new band.

# Columbia Daily Tribune

**Notes and tones: New releases showcase dynamic approaches to group playing**

**By Jon W. Poses**

Special to Columbia Daily Tribune

What better way to recognize Independence Day — musically speaking — than to share some wonderfully strong and varied releases?

I have always loved the piano trio; the triangular configuration requires immense skill from, and communication between, players. Yet, almost magically, it also allows for — and actually needs — nourishment in the form of whole bunches of space and freedom for each participant to express themself throughout.

**“All Things Are” (Smoke Sessions)**, likewise, features a piano trio. However, this unit is organized as a three-way cooperative: pianist Kevin Hays, bassist Ben Street and drummer Billy Hart. Hays, who penned all but one of the seven elongated entries, none less than a hair shy of 8 minutes, describes the music in the liner notes:

“This is the way I like to play. I like the unplanned and I tend not to be directive — these musicians already have direction.”

This is certainly true. Hays’ colleagues represent a pair of free-thinking, improvisation-driven protagonists. Street, for his part, possesses a wide range of musical portals; his palette is colorful, filled with texture and can be delivered both delicately and forcefully.

It’s anyone’s guess why drummer Hart, still atop the creative hill at 80, has not been tabbed a National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master. His soul oozes creativity and spontaneity; his brush work and use of accentuation are immediately identifiable and a hallmark of jazz itself — having your own voice.

Hays finishes his thoughts this way: “This isn’t a free trio; we’re not playing free jazz. But we’re playing with the tabula rasa spirit, with as little as possible figured out other than the bare bones.”

# DownBeat

Kevin Hays/Ben Street/Billy Hart

All Things Are

SMOKE SESSIONS RECORDS

Heralded for his melodic and harmonic ingenuity, Kevin Hays also has an inherent dance in his piano playing. It’s a joy to hear him with an all-star trio, which, after 1996’s Andalucia (with Ron Carter and Jack DeJohnette), has been surprisingly rare. *All Things Are*, on which Hays shares billing with bassist Ben Street and drummer Billy Hart, makes it worth the wait.

As the swing unfolds on the title track (Hays’ contrafact on guess-which-standard), the three musicians seem to bond at the molecular level. They engage in constant conversation throughout their solos, with the pianist responding in particular to cues from the drummer, while Street threads the needle with aplomb. Elsewhere, one struggles to say who’s leading whom. When the tenderness of “Elegia” gives way to a strut groove, it seems to be Hays at the wheel. Yet Street and Hart are clearly ready for each of his twists and turns, staying right on top of him even as he fractures phrases and beats.

The above-mentioned melodic/harmonic ingenuity is present as well — in spades. Hays wrote six of *All Things Are*’s seven tunes, leads the way in reinventing them. While the whole trio gives a high-impact groove workout to his gorgeous “New Day,” Hays is the one throwing out abstract chordings and contemporary classical allusions; on the standard “For Heaven’s Sake,” he tests the tensile strength of the harmonies   la Geri Allen. Hart and Street get in on that action with “Sweet Caroline” (Hays’ tune, not Neil Diamond’s); their patterns, and their subtle disruptions thereof, are as inventive as anything Hays dreams up. —Michael J. West

# Glide Magazine

JUNE 2, 2021

ALBUM REVIEWS, REVIEWS

By Jim Hynes

Pianist Kevin Hays, Bassist Ben Street and Drummer Billy Hart Gang Up On ‘All Things Are’ (ALBUM REVIEW)

On the first weekend of December 2020, three great musicians gathered at the otherwise empty Smoke Jazz & Supper Club in New York to celebrate renowned drummer, **Billy Hart’s** 80th birthday.  The three had never played as a unit before but took the bandstand after just one rehearsal for a series of virtual performances.  All parties were so elated with the results that now we have *All Things Are*, featuring pianist **Kevin Hays** and bassist **Ben Street** joining Hart for improvisational, free-flowing performances. Hays and Street are some three decades younger than Hart, so it’s fair to say that this is a multi-generational trio. Street is most familiar with Hart as he’s been a member of Hart’s working quartet with pianist Ethan Iverson and saxophonist Mark Turner since 2006.  Hays, however, only played with Hart in an impromptu invite in Spain when he was just 18 years old. Nonetheless, Hays is integral to this recording not only as a player but as a composer.

Hays composed six of the seven pieces, three original melodies, and three crafted contrafacts of well-known standards. He is a versatile pianist, described mostly as favoring duo and trio settings, note that he is a core member of The Steve Gadd Band too, as heard on their latest release (covered on these pages)*Live: At Blue Note Tokyo.* Hays has some of the unpredictable qualities albeit with a smoother touch, that we associate with Monk. You’ll hear this on the opening “New Day,” the only non-Hays original, where the band finishes the head and then drifts into a completely different space. Street stopped playing, Hart hit a few different beats and the pianist took the cues and led them into left field. Piano enthusiasts may recognize “Elegia,” as it debuted on *Modern Music*, Hays two-piano recital with Brad Mehldau. The chord changes here are beautiful, and, also at times unexpected.

One can likely guess the contrafacts from the titles. Of course, the title track stems from “All the Things You Are,” “Unscrappulous” from “Scrapple from the Apple” and “Twilight” from “Stella by Starlight.” Street, who is keenly aware of Hart’s style, commented that Hart was supporting Hays much in the way he would support a vocalist. Street, too picked up on that claims that it guided the session. As you listen the two of them are mostly in restrained and subtle support to Hays. The interplay is tight but unlike many piano trios, there are not many solo opportunities but some distinct ones for the bassist and drummer here, for example, Street’s lyrical plucking toward the end of “Elegia.” Hart and Street in tandem mostly alternate pushing or following Hays in his improvisational excursions. So, the bare bones of the compositions are here but the trio gives them a very free and open feel.

“Unscrappulous” is based on the bop tune original but Hays and trio twist and turn it, injecting some blues, as Hart’s flourishes come to the fore as well. The almost 12-minute long “For Heaven’s Sake” is a contemplative ballad played deliberately as Hart uses his brushes deftly, a technique he’s widely respected for. The title track moves briskly with syncopated rhythms in spots, punctuated by Street’s pulsing bass and Hart’s skittering snare work.  There is a break for some Hart-Street dialogue and Street ‘s melodic, robust solo followed by Hart’s own declamation. “Sweet Caroline” boasts some of Street’s best bass work, colorful chord changes, and a series of shimmering runs.  Street also leads into the closer, “Twilight,” where Hays takes more to chords and a minimalist approach on the melody.

The conversations among this trio range from overt to subtle to “let’s try this.” The open spirit of the session unfolds perhaps just a little tentatively at first but by the closing “Twilight”, they are operating like a well-lubricated engine.

# Jazziz

**Kevin Hays, Ben Street and Billy Hart, *All Things Are* (Smoke Sessions)**

*Release date: June 4*

Pianist Kevin Hays, bassist Ben Street and drummer Billy Hays collaborate on strikingly telepathic performances on *All Things Are*, recorded in December 2020 at an empty Smoke Jazz & Supper Club and after only one rehearsal session. The set is drawn from this multi-generational trio’s two livestream performances celebrating Hart’s 80th birthday and features seven pieces in total, six of which were composed by Hays.

# JazzWeekly

Kevin Hays, Ben Street, Billy Hart: All Things Are

by [George W. Harris](https://www.jazzweekly.com/author/george-w-harris/) • June 7, 2021

All stars Kevin Hays/p, Ben Street/b and Billy Hart/dr put together a classy interplay of trio work on this recent get-together. Hays has teamed with Hart in years past, and although he’s better known for his work with Bill Stewart he sounds right at home in this team, flowing gorgeously on the easy swing of “New Day” and throwing out rich chords to Hart’s deft support on “All Things Are.” Hart glides over the cymbals on the romantic “Elegia” with Hays in a classical mood, and assets himself with sharp bopping corners on the Monkish “Unscrappulous”. Street delivers a funky bass intro to the soul gospel grooved “Sweet Caroline” and passes the baton to Hays on the bluesy “Twilight”. These guys sound like they grew up together; the comradery is sublime.

# JazzWise

KEVIN HAYS, BEN STREET, BILLY HART: ALL THINGS ARE

Rating: ★★★★

Author: Peter Vacher

This is from a live-stream session beamed to the world by Smoke Jazz Club, on New York's Broadway, ostensibly to celebrate Hart's 80th birthday, so let's hear it for him. More than that, it's an engaging exploration of the creativity of these three: Hays, now 53 and quite a veteran, with a substantial discography, leading the way. His ‘New Day’ is optimistic in tone, playful almost, the piano line quite uncluttered, leaving space aplenty, the phrasing clipped, Hart making the pathway interesting, Street on the case. ‘Elegia’ is subtle, the melody and harmonies almost cryptic, soft-sounding, while ‘Unscrappulous’ [a contrafact from ‘Scrapple From The Apple’] is livelier, Hart setting off fireworks at every turn, as Hays zigzags around the percussive bonfire.

‘For Heaven's Sake’ is simply beautiful, calm, momentarily recalling Brad Mehldau's approach, the limpid harmonies touching, Hays thinking on his feet [or seat], Hart quiet and Street making the right noises. The title track, based on ‘All The Things You Are’, exudes spontaneity, the momentum building as the pianist delves deeper and deeper, Hart inspiring and Street solid in solo. ‘Sweet Caroline’ has the kind of ‘sound of surprise’ quality that brings Keith Jarrett to mind and is packed with incident, Hart delivering messages demanding attention. Hays’ precise touch and his penchant for harmonic surprises make this whole outing a joy, nothing wasted, no notes unconsidered: a neat way, too, to recognise Hart's longevity.

# LA Jazz Scene

Scott Yanow

July 2021

The trio of pianist Kevin Hays, bassist Ben Street, and drummer Billy Hart performed a LiveStream at New York City’s Smoke during Dec. 4-5, 2020 to celebrate Hart’s 80th birthday. Although there was no audience in the club, the musicians were quite happy to have the opportunity to play with each other after nine months of near-silence.

Hays has long been a delight to hear. His piano playing stretches the boundaries of bop and hard bop in a manner similar to Keith Jarrett, embracing melodies and bluesiness while often teetering on the verge of going outside the changes. With Street and Hart following him closely while offering some potential directions of their own, All Things Are is one of the finest piano trio albums of the past year.

The opener, “New Day” (one of seven Hays originals) sets a mood of optimism that is heard throughout the set. Other highlights include “Unscrappulous” (an offbeat piece based on “Scrapple From The Apple”), a heartfelt rendition of the standard “For Heaven’s Sake” that ends as a long unaccompanied piano solo, and a largely hidden “All The Things You Are” (reborn as “All Things Are”), but every selection is enjoyable to hear.

# Musical Memoirs

MUSIC OF POWER AND ENDURANCE: JAZZ KEEPS HOPE ALIVE

By Dee Dee McNeil

June 22, 2021

**HAYS STREET HART – “ALL THINGS ARE”** – Smoke Sessions Records

*Kevin Hays, piano; Ben Street, bass; Billy Hart, drums.*

These three musicians have been some of the busiest in the business of jazz for decades. Kevin Hays, Billy Hart and Ben Street joined hands and hearts to create this album.  Here is a unique trio, drawn together during the frustrating and intimidating time of the pandemic lock-down, joined in celebration of Billy Hart’s 80th birthday.  Although Hart and Ben Street were in a quartet together and comfortable with their musical camaraderie, playing with well-respected Kevin Hays was new.  The three musicians met at the Smoke Jazz Club, in New York City, for the gig.  It was December 4th and 5th of 2020 when they ‘livestream’ recorded this music. It was challenging, only because all three had been quarantined for so long, there was concern by each musician about playing in a ‘live’ interactive group setting.  This album is proof that everything worked out quite well.

They open with “New Day,” one of six original compositions by pianist, Kevin Hays.  Hays describes the tune as moving from ‘one/four’ to ‘two/five,’ (referencing chord changes) which isn’t necessarily typical as a song form.  He also has written the bridge with an odd five bars.  It’s a moderate tempo’d piece, with some time-changes that fall unexpectedly, letting the spotlight bathe warmly over Hays at the piano.  When Street and Hart re-enter the arrangement, they swing hard.  So, the session began with the musicians wearing masks and surrounded by protective plexiglass, letting their individual talents meet like old friends enjoying the birthday party; music bounced around the room like helium balloons.

*“I thought that with no rehearsal, because of COVID, it would help for us to just hit,”* Kevin Hays recalls.

Hart and Street had roots in the Billy Hart Quartet, so they quickly locked into a well-oiled rhythm unit; fluid and familiar with each other.  They also had history, working together as a trio with pianist Aaron Parks.

*“Kevin has always been one of my very favorite piano players, but I never get a chance to play with him.  He doesn’t get nearly enough credit, compared to how gifted and original he is and Ben’s arguably, in today’s world, my favorite bass player,”* Hart affirms.

Track 2 is titled, “Elegia.”  It’s romantic, ethereal, and Hays creates lots of space during the introduction, setting things up until Hart and Street enter and subtly drive the music forward.

*“What he has, … you see it in Hank Jones and Tommy Flanagan.  It’s a depth of feeling. … His choice of notes is very moving to me,”* Billy Hart compliments Kevin Hays.

On “Elegia,” Ben Street holds the center of the music strongly in place and knows just when to go with the flow and when to quietly lay out and let the music untangle itself on the eighty-eight keys.

*“Hays is one of those everybody’s favorite pianist,”* Ben Street speaks about Hays.

*“And Billy really focused it for me.  He seemed to be hearing Kevin as a singer,”* Ben Street added.

For familiarities sake and perhaps to challenge himself, Kevin Hays re-composed Charlie Parker’s “Scrapple From the Apple” into a tune he calls “Unscrappulous.”  It’s recognizable enough for Street and Hart to jump into deep water with both feet, but the tune is completely redressed, wearing a similar form but a different swim suit.  Ben Street is quite melodic, on bass, during this up-tempo, but brief three-minute and thirty-six second excursion. One of my favorites on this album is the lovely way Hays plays the standard jazz ballad, “For Heaven’s Sake.”  The piano harmonics are so rich, colorful and often unexpected. Ben Street builds a solid basement for the structure to stand upon playing his double bass.

*“And to play with someone like Billy, who is such a responsive musician, I noticed some little telepathy-type things that were going on.  How did we both do that at the exact same time?”*  Hays marveled.

The title tune is based on Jerome Kern’s chord changes for “All the Things You are” and it dances along at a brisk, but comfortable pace.  Hays has a piano style that flutters.  His fingers fly across the keys in spurts of genius and creativity.  On “Sweet Caroline” Hart and Street open the piece, establishing a blues groove.  I know where Gene Harris or Monte Alexander would have taken it, but Kevin Hays is more about the beauty than the blues.  All in all, this is a musical art exhibit awaiting the listener’s provocative review and appreciation.  Each song becomes its own unique and intriguing sculpture, built before our very eyes, in the imitable way that jazz grows; through improvisation, freedom and creativity.

# The Times

Kevin Hays, Ben Street and Billy Hart: All Things Are review — a snapshot of spontaneity and solitude

[Chris Pearson](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/profile/chris-pearson)

Wednesday June 30 2021, 5.00pm, The Times

**Kevin Hays, Ben Street and Billy Hart**  
All Things Are  
★★★★☆

Jazz has given us a few Covid-themed albums lately, but this may be the first to be dictated by the pandemic instead of being about it. In March last year an engagement by Kevin Hays at the Manhattan club Smoke was curtailed by the virus. In December the American pianist returned to tape a concert without an audience. Recorded in real time, it is neither a gig nor a record date, but suspended, as we all have been this past year.

Hays shares billing with the bassist Ben Street and the drummer Billy Hart, but this makes the solitude more tangible than it would be if he were alone. The spontaneity of the playing is offset by the aura of haunted restraint imposed by the deserted venue. A sinuous Latin rhythm draws the plaintive *Elegia*into the playful, yet Hay’s passionate solo is tinged with sadness. The toe-tapper *New Day*is part soul-jazz, part lost soul.

Many of the originals are contrafacts, ie based on the harmonies of other tunes, another form of distancing. *Unscrappulous*is tantalisingly close to the source theme, *Scrapple from the Apple*, and the trio give it a funky bebop treatment with Hays tossing out paranoid phrases against a twitchy beat. The sublime, swaggering title track, based on *All the Things You Are*, pits a robust rhythm against plenty of plush piano.

# WBGO “Take Five”

**Kevin Hays, Ben Street, Billy Hart, "Elegia"**

Last December, pianist Kevin Hays played one of his first club dates in the pandemic era, at Smoke Jazz Club. It was a livestream with an all-virtual audience, of course, and he decided to call on bassist Ben Street and drummer Billy Hart for the occasion. Establishing an instantaneous rapport as a trio, they performed a set that, on further reflection, was too good not to release as an album. Titled *All Things Are,*that album is due out Friday on [Smoke Sessions Records](https://smokesessionsrecords.com). (*Disclosure:*I wrote the liner notes.)

The album largely consists of Hays' clever reconfigurations of jazz standards, including "All the Things You Are" (the album's title track). But "Elegia" is an original piece: a drifting, melancholy composition that he previously recorded for *North,*an album by his New Day Trio. (It also appears on the album *Modern Music,*as a somber [piano duet](https://youtu.be/hxmA098MFsw) with Brad Mehldau.) In the hands of Hart and Street, the tune feels grounded and grooving; Hays, responding to their energy, plays with quiet fire, flowing clarity and even some sly humor. (Don't miss the briefest nod to a Jimmy McHugh / Dorothy Fields standard, "Exactly Like You," at 5:22.)