



Wes Montgomery

*Down Here on the
Ground*

1967

A&M Records

Down Here on the Ground by Wes Montgomery

Timothy Boudreau

For me working with words requires music without them; something sweet and soft, in places nearly silent; pieces that flow one into another like currents, merging at last, on the best early mornings and later evenings, into a perfect pastoral background.

One could do worse than Wes Montgomery: his later, sometimes unfairly maligned recordings for A&M. Let's take *Down Here on the Ground*. The gently propulsive opener, "Wind Song"; a simple, beautiful cover of "Georgia on My Mind"; a few jazzy improvisations, brilliantly brief; the dream-like title tune, with its stunning little string arrangement.

I often played the CD, back when people played CD's, on Sunday mornings, in a 5-CD changer along with (let's say) Stan Getz, Earl Klugh, Marvin Gaye and Sade. Sunday morning: coffee, French toast, the right music—perfect. But it's mainly as a compliment for creative work that I continue to turn to it.

There are other artists who work as well as Wes—play me Antonio Carlos Jobim, George Shearing, Gary Burton, or many others—but what is wanted is anything evocative, lovely and spacious. Vibes, strings, clarinet, subtle guitar, flute; vocals are sometimes vital, but not while I'm working, unless the words are in a language I don't entirely understand.

Evocative, lovely and spacious: one might also say sentimental, conservative and hopelessly uncool. Elevator music forty years past its expiration date. To each his own, of course, but then perhaps many years ago, when a little boy rode around a grocery store in a shopping cart, this was the music that stirred his dreaming mind—which was also fascinated by the crusty North Country people and the piles of produce, by the cheerful rush and bustle and sudden semi-silence in the soap aisle; fascinated by colorful cans and cereal boxes and fresh tomatoes. Perhaps this piped-in music, as much as anything else, seemed to point toward some inner door which would open one day on worlds that didn't yet exist, but that somehow he would have to create on his own.

Though to look too closely at our sources might spoil them. As I finish this I listen to Wes's great version of "When I Look in Your Eyes"—his guitar with its unmatched plush tone along with a soaring violin—and, though there are no words, none are needed.